

Amateur photographer

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Legotron

The amazing large-format camera that's made of Lego



Samsung NX1

Why **Canon** and **Nikon** should fear Samsung's new flagship

20 Tips for winter landscapes

Top landscape photographers explain how to get the best from this photogenic season

PLUS 125 years of **National Geographic** covers • Zoltan Bekefy's moody mono landscapes

D750

24³
MEGAPIXEL

51
FOCUS
POINTS

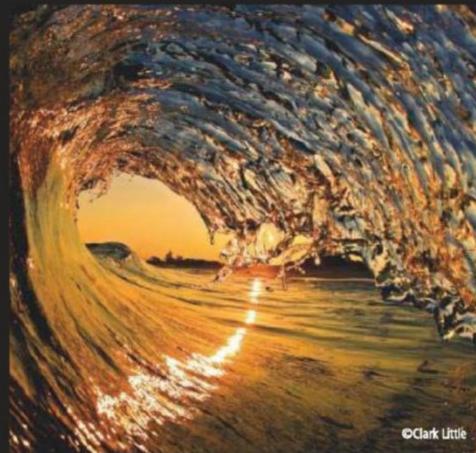
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COVER PICTURE © EDWARD RODRIGUES

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ANYONE who woke today from a ten-year coma would be surprised at how Samsung has transformed from a second-tier brand best known for cheap microwaves into a prestige manufacturer that's a market leader in the TV and mobile sectors. Yet despite having shifted container-loads of point-and-shoot compacts, the company has so far failed to gain a foothold with serious photographers.

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7days

A week in photography

However, the new Samsung NX1 (tested on pages 46-51) may just change that, with a formidable spec sheet and a performance that impressed our technical team. At the other end of the scale, I love Cary Norton's Legotron camera (pages 34-36). I've spent many happy hours playing with those coloured bricks with my kids and often pondered the possibility of building a working camera out of them, so I'm thrilled that someone has made one and achieved such great results with it. **Nigel Atherton, Editor**

ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK



© MATT FRANKLIN

Untitled

by Matt Franklin

Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 85mm, 1/2000sec at f/2, ISO 200

MATT Franklin, also known as Onform1, uploaded this image to our Flickr page.

'This photograph of my son was taken from outside looking in through my patio door,' says Matt. 'I took a couple of photos that day with the same set-up, but I love the look and feel of his breath and nose up against the glass.'

'I always try to create images that have

something different or original in them. I'm always intrigued by shadows and reflections, and although inspiration usually comes from *Amateur Photographer* or Flickr, I'm heavily influenced by the beauty and realism of modern wet-plate collodion photography.'

Why not upload your favourite shots to our Flickr, Facebook or website gallery pages? You could win a digital subscription.



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Each week we will choose our favourite picture posted on the AP Facebook and Flickr communities and the AP forum. The winner will receive a year's digital subscription to AP worth £79.99.

Send us your pictures If you'd like to see your work published in *Amateur Photographer*, here's how to send us your images:

Email Email a selection of low-res images (up to 5MB of attachments in total) to appicturedesk@timeinc.com.

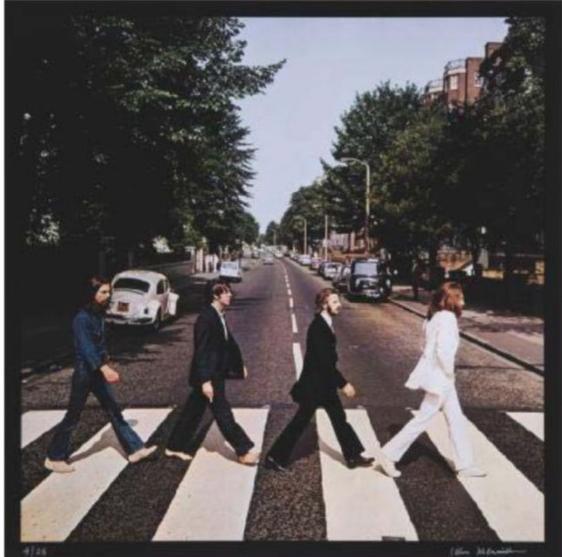
CD/DVD Send us a disc of high-resolution JPEG, TIFF or PSD images (at least 2480 pixels along its longest length), with a contact sheet, to the address on page 24.

Via our online communities Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page or the gallery on our website. See details above.

Transparencies/prints Well-packaged prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 24.

NEWS ROUND-UP

The week in brief, edited by Chris Cheesman



Star performance

A rare set of Beatles photographs has sold for £180,000, shattering an estimated auction price of £50,000-£70,000. Captured by Scottish photographer Iain Macmillan, the 'out-takes' were sold alongside the final cover shot chosen by Paul McCartney for The Beatles' *Abbey Road* album. The set of Beatles photos sold to an unnamed private overseas telephone bidder.



Sony lens revamp

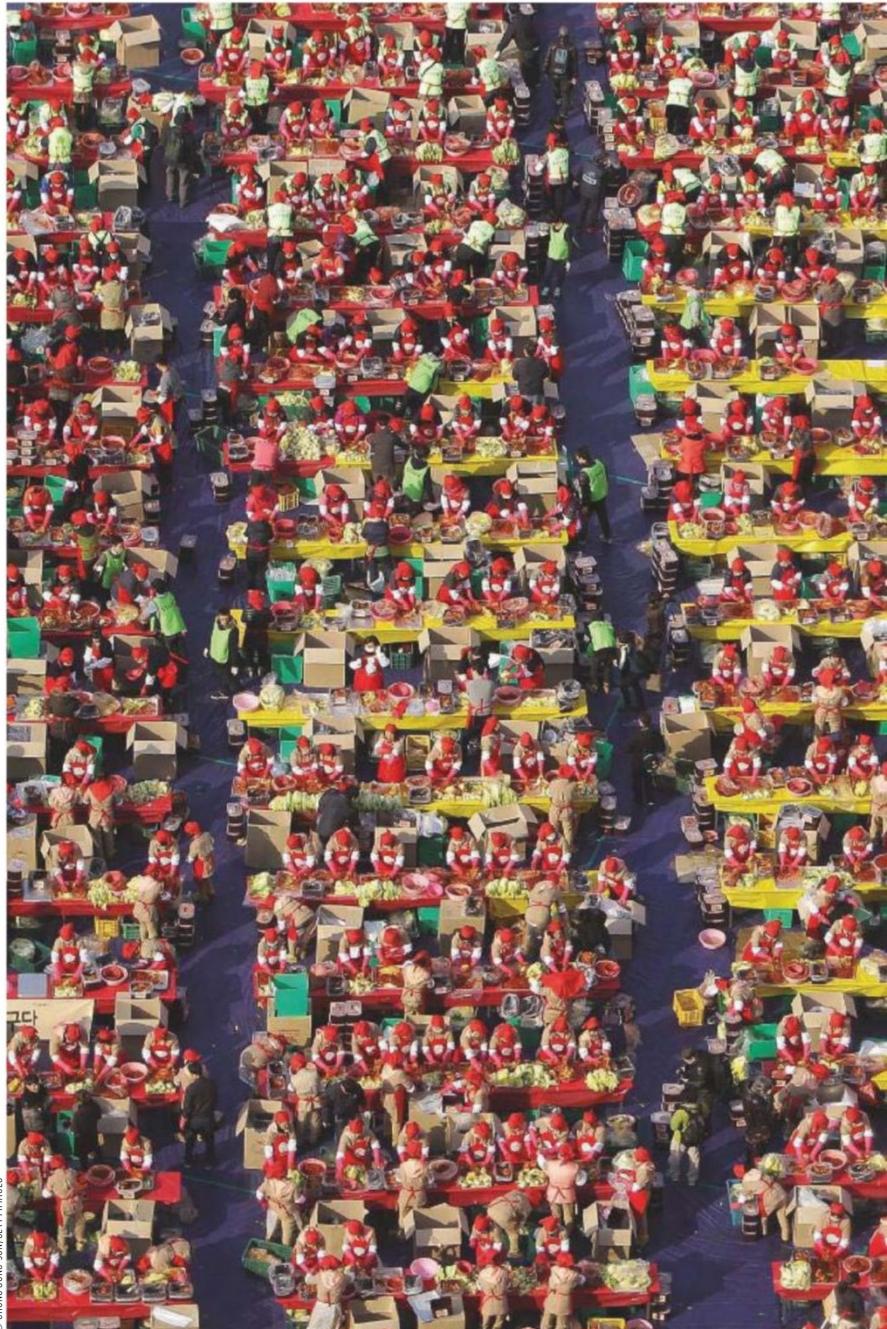
Sony has revamped its 70-300mm A-mount telephoto lens. The 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 G SSM II is built to be suitable for sports and wildlife photos, as well as portrait and tele-macro shooting. Features include '4x faster' AF tracking, a moisture and dust-resistant design, and a Nano AR coating to help cut flare and ghosting. The lens is due out in March 2015.

Park pics for free

Leica Fotopark offers 10GB of free storage. The online service is designed to allow users to showcase their work and organise their portfolio. They can also order fine-art quality prints and frames. There is also a 'premium' membership that allows users to store up to 100GB of photos, for €10 per month. Visit www.leica-fotopark.com.

CM1 UK date

Panasonic is set to launch its Lumix DMC-CM1 compact camera with Android in the UK this month. Panasonic says the CM1 is 'a camera with Android rather than a smartphone with a camera'. Expected to cost £799.99, the CM1 was initially only due to be launched in France and Germany.



WEEKEND PROJECT

Shoot mono

If you've ever shot black & white film, you'll know that creating a good mono image requires a set of skills entirely separate to colour. Most modern DSLRs now feature a built-in black & white mode, which enables you to shoot mono images straight out of the camera. Activating this often-overlooked feature is actually a great way to challenge your

photography skills, as it takes away any reliance on bright colours to help make a shot interesting. Colours are transformed into tones, which forces you to look at scenes in an entirely different manner. So, this weekend, why not test your photography skills by stripping away the colour from your photos to capture some raw and gritty mono imagery.

1 With all colour stripped away, you're going to have to rely on elements such as texture, tone and shape to draw the viewer's eye into your shot and make it appear visually interesting. Keep an eye out for unusual shapes and patterns.

2 When shooting black & white, the colour noise that's generated when using higher ISOs ceases to be a problem. Instead, it creates a colourless 'grain', which can be used to add a gritty, film-like appearance to your shots.

BIG picture

A stunning image of South Koreans making kimchi for the poor

 This busy image comes from Getty photographer Chung Sung-Jun. Sung-Jun's image shows more than 2,000 South Koreans making kimchi – a nutritious meal that will be donated to the poor in preparation for the cold months of winter.

The workers gathered at the City Hall of Seoul, in South Korea, on 14 November 2014, to make the national dish – around 250 tonnes worth. Kimchi is a traditional Korean meal of fermented vegetables, usually mixed with chilli or a variety of seasonings, and eaten with rice or served as a side dish to a main meal. There are hundreds of varieties of kimchi, which can use napa cabbage, radish, spring onion or cucumber as a main ingredient.

Words & numbers

I don't want anyone to appreciate the light or the palette of tones.

I want my pictures to inform, to provoke discussion – and to raise money

Sebastião Salgado

Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist

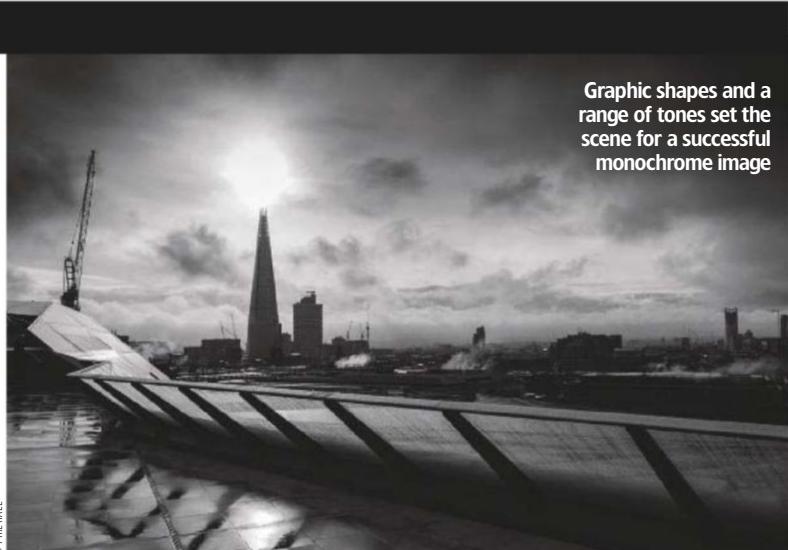
3,500

Number of exhibitors expected to attend the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, USA, from 6-9 January 2015



3 Did you know that on some cameras you can adjust the amount of contrast added to your JPEG images via the camera settings menu? This is a great way to add some punch to your images if they're looking a little flat.

4 It's a good idea to set your camera to shoot in raw + JPEG mode. In that way, the black & white effect will only be applied to the JPEG image, leaving the raw image as a full-colour backup should you dislike the mono version.



© PHIL HALL

Sony Alpha 7 II

The **Alpha 7 II** updates Sony's ground-breaking full-frame mirrorless model with in-body stabilisation. **Andy Westlake** takes a first look



At a glance

- 24.3-million-pixel, full-frame Exmor CMOS sensor
- Bionz X processor
- 2.36-million-dot OLED viewfinder
- 3in, 1.23-million-dot tiltable TFT LCD with WhiteMagic technology
- ISO 50–25,600 (extended)
- Supports XAVC S and S-Log2 gamma
- Price £1,500 body only, £1,700 with 28–70mm f/3.5–4.5 OSS lens

The Alpha 7 II is barely bigger than the Alpha 7, shown here on the right



5-axis in-body image stabilisation

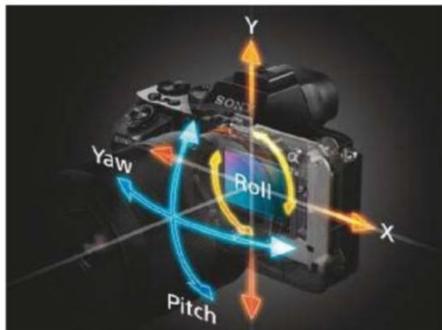
THE ALPHA 7 II is both the first camera with a full-frame sensor to feature 5-axis stabilisation, and the first with an in-body system that can work in concert with lens stabilisation.

In addition to the usual pitch and yaw compensation, the 5-axis system corrects for vertical and sideways motion, along with rotation around the lens axis. This improves stabilisation for close-up shooting and long exposures. Sony claims shutter speeds 4.5 stops slower than usual can be used without blurring from camera shake.

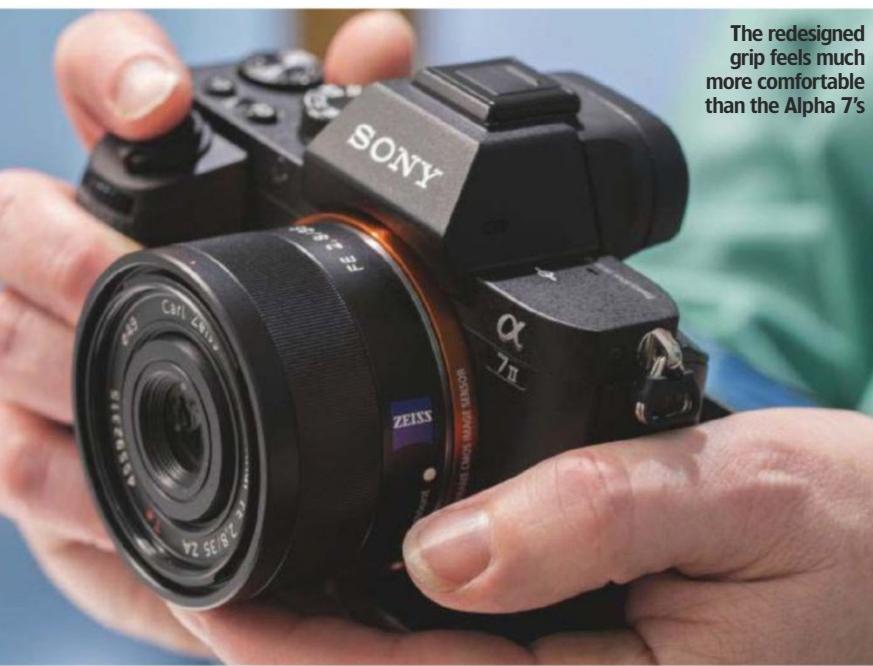
The image stabilisation should work with almost any lens, which is particularly useful for users of

Sony A-mount lenses, none of which has optical stabilisation. When an E-mount lens with built-in optical stabilisation is used, the two systems work together, with the sensor providing correction for rotational and translational movements, while the in-lens stabilisation deals with angular motion.

With legacy manual-focus lenses that can't communicate with the camera, the focal length has to be entered manually by the user for the system to work, with settings available covering 8mm to 1,000mm. The effect of the image stabilisation is visible both in the electronic viewfinder and on the rear screen.



The Alpha 7 II gains 5-axis in-body stabilisation



THE ALPHA 7 II is Sony's update to its full-frame compact system camera, the Alpha 7. The key changes are a redesigned grip and control layout, and the incorporation of 5-axis in-body image stabilisation. Sony says that the 'Mark II' doesn't directly replace the previous model, but instead will sell alongside it.

Compared to the Alpha 7, most key components are unchanged, including the 24.3-million-pixel, full-frame sensor, Bionz X processor and 2.36-million-dot OLED viewfinder. However, the tilting rear LCD now includes WhiteMagic technology, which promises improved visibility in bright light. Sadly, though, the screen is still not touch-sensitive.

Autofocus has been improved with faster focus acquisition and improved tracking, while start-up times are also quicker. The lock-on AF function, which helps track a subject by understanding its size and shape, has been improved too. In our brief time using the camera, the Alpha 7 II's autofocus certainly felt improved over that of its predecessor.

Videographers get a host of the latest features, including the XAVC S codec, S-Log2 gamma, and the ability to record an easily shareable MP4 file at the same time as full-resolution AVCHD or XAVC S. Those who shoot handheld will also appreciate the image stabilisation (IS) system.

Build quality has been upgraded, with the Alpha 7's composite front and top-plates replaced by magnesium alloy, making the camera feel a little more solid.

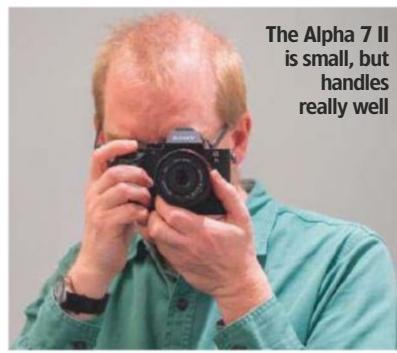
Revised grip and ergonomics

Externally, the biggest changes to the Alpha 7 II lie in its handgrip and control

layout. The grip's shape has been resculpted to a more conventional, DSLR-like form, and the shutter button and front control dial repositioned. Personally, I have to say that this feels like a huge step forward. The grip shape is much more natural in your hand, and all the control dials are within easy reach, as are the two top-plate function buttons.

First impressions

While the Alpha 7 was certainly a ground-breaking camera, packing a full-frame sensor into a compact mirrorless body, its slightly oddball design always seemed to count against it; personally, I never found it as pleasant a camera to use as its main rivals from Fujifilm and Olympus. The Alpha 7 II promises to change all that, essentially fixing most of the complaints that were raised against it. The addition of in-body image stabilisation is the icing on the cake, especially as it should work with a huge range of third-party lenses. Overall, I think quite a few photographers who weren't sure about the Alpha 7 will be won over by this new model.



For the latest news visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Get up & go

The most interesting things to see, to do and to shoot this week. By Jon Stapley

WILTSHIRE



Longleat Festival of Light

Europe's largest-ever display of Chinese lanterns lights up Longleat at night throughout December as part of the Christmas celebrations. Here's a chance for some low-light shots with a difference.

Until 4 January 2015, www.longleat.co.uk/christmas

LONDON



Winter Festival

For the Southbank Winter Festival with NatWest, London's Southbank Centre lights up, with displays, markets and a programme centred around the theme of giving. The best shots are likely to be found in the evenings.

Until 11 January 2015
www.southbankcentre.co.uk/winter

CARDIFF



Artes Mundi 6

A range of disciplines and art styles come into play for the Artes Mundi 6 exhibition at Ffotogallery. Sanja Ivekovic appropriates glossy magazine adverts to make political critique, while video installations are delivered by Ragnar Kjartansson.

Until 21 February 2015
www.ffotogallery.org

Christmas Artists Open Houses

EAST SUSSEX



Discover a little of the artistic talent that resides in Brighton and Hove, and poke around their homes. Among those artists throwing their spaces open is photographer André Lichtenberg, who will be exhibiting large-scale conceptual cityscapes.

Until 14 December, aoh.org.uk/xmas-2014-festival-home

Association of Photographers Awards

On 11 December, the Association of Photographers will announce the winners of its annual awards, and thereafter will follow a two-day expo featuring seminars from photographic luminaries as well as a chance to see the winning images from the awards. Register at the website.

12-13 December, www.the-aop.org

LONDON





Viewpoint

Jon Bentley

If you long to shoot film and develop your own prints but don't have the means to do so, then Ilford's Local Darkroom scheme could be for you

When, a generation or so ago, I left home for the world of work, I really missed my darkroom. Over the decades, I've made the occasional enquiry about darkrooms to rent, but they were usually far away from my Birmingham home. I still hanker after the analogue printing process: the manual shading and burning in under the enlarger; and the thrill of seeing an image emerge in the tray under the glowing amber light.

Ironically, digital technology could provide the solution. Just as the internet encourages the sharing of accommodation through Airbnb and cars through Zipcar, Harman Technology, which owns Ilford, has created a Local Darkroom scheme. On its website, www.locaaldarkroom.com, people with darkroom facilities can register them on a website and make contact with those who want to use them.

The scheme launched at the end of 2013 and it's still early days; if you're expecting comprehensive national coverage you'll be disappointed, but there are already some intriguing options among the 80 public and private darkrooms listed around the UK. These include landscape photographers with private darkrooms to share in the Lake District, Dorset and the

Gower Peninsula, and public darkrooms in places like Glasgow, Derby and Hastings.

Some charge by the hour or session, others require a modest subscription, while some people don't charge at all, presumably because they're on a mission to spread the joys of film photography.

I made contact with the owner closest to me, Ian Grant. I found him in the midst of recommissioning a comfortably large darkroom at the bottom of his garden following a recent house move. When finished, it will boast a De Vere enlarger, a sink big enough to accommodate huge prints, and a wide range of equipment. Ian, who incidentally has a collection of vintage large-format cameras, hopes to operate it on a semi-commercial basis and, like many on the site, he's offering tuition as well.

I think [locaaldarkroom.com](http://www.locaaldarkroom.com) is a brilliant idea. What it needs to gain momentum is more publicity, generating more interest from both darkroom providers and users, and capitalising on what seems to be a booming niche of traditional photography. Do spread the word. Film photography enthusiasts, whether newcomers or of the born-again variety, are sure to appreciate it.

Jon Bentley is a TV producer and presenter best known for *Top Gear* and Channel 5's *The Gadget Show*



Ian Grant, whose Birmingham facilities can be hired through [locaaldarkroom.com](http://www.locaaldarkroom.com)

Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest? Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the address on page 24 and win a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99

New Books

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By Oliver Atwell



Landmark: The Fields of Landscape Photography

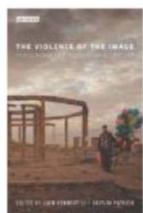
By William A Ewing, Thames & Hudson, £39.95, hardback, 256 pages, ISBN 9-780-50054-433-4



THE landscape genre is a densely populated field. The geography of our planet – both natural and man-made – not only provides photographers with a means of exploring the beauty of the world, but also offers a valuable dialogue about our political and cultural agendas. *Landmark* is a defining survey of contemporary landscape photography and includes 230 images from 100 photographers, many of whom concern themselves with how the landscape is a fluctuating and effervescent projection of our modern concerns. Bucolic landscapes share space with those displaying the scars of human intervention. All communicate the idea that landscapes can be so much more than pretty pictures. In the right hands, they can serve as an affecting document of humanity's place in the world. ★★★★

The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict

By Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick, IB Tauris, £15.99, paperback, ISBN 9-781-78076-789-5



DO WE, as a people, truly suffer from compassion fatigue? Many people believe it is inevitable, as images of violence appear on the pages of newspapers and websites. When this is – supposedly – the case, it becomes even more necessary to examine the role photography plays in documenting war. While we may seem less compassionate, perhaps we have simply developed new methods of engagement, such as the internet, smartphones and digital photography. These issues lie at the heart of *The Violence of the Image*, a book that argues that the public's commitment to the truth of documentary photography is as strong as it ever was. While this is one of many books dealing with this subject, it is still more than worth exploring. ★★★★



Sony Alpha Centres of Excellence

To find out why you should shop at an Alpha Centre of Excellence, **Richard Sibley** visited **David Podbury**, manager of Pantiles Cameras in Tunbridge Wells

Cameras are one of the most popular gifts at Christmas, but whether you're buying one as a present or treating yourself, it is important that you walk away with the right model. 'These days

cameras are so different, and so are photographers needs,' says Pantiles Camera's David Podbury.

The staff in every Sony Alpha Centre of Excellence are trained in the latest cameras and accessories. 'Whether it is the style of camera, or

essential features for sharing such as Wi-Fi or NFC connectivity, or capturing the Christmas lights, we can find the right camera for the customer,' says David. 'We can demonstrate exactly how to use these key features on Sony cameras, so that after making their purchase customers are ready to use the camera immediately.'

David's recommendations this Christmas are the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX50 – 'It's a great camera at an amazing price' – the Alpha 6000, which he describes as 'the best compact system camera in its class', and the original Sony Alpha 7 – 'At under £1,000, it's great value.'

Introducing the new Alpha 7 II

The latest addition in the range adds 5-axis stabilisation

THE RECENTLY announced Sony Alpha 7 II may have the same 24-million-pixel, full-frame sensor as its predecessor, but it has some excellent new features. The most obvious of these is the new, larger and more contoured handgrip. However, the standout feature is the addition of 5-axis in-camera sensor stabilisation, which offers the



equivalent of up to 4.5EV extra stability. This will be a real benefit when shooting handheld in low light.

Up to £200 cashback

SONY is offering up to £200 cashback on selected Sony cameras, lenses and other accessories between now and 25 January. For example, if you purchase a Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX1 or RX1R, you will receive £200 back. The Alpha 6000 comes with £50 cashback, with £100 cashback on the Zeiss Vario Tessar T* 24-70mm f/4 ZA OSS lens for the Alpha 7 range.

For the full list of products and more information, or to claim your cashback, see www.sony.co.uk/imagingcashback

ASK.....	London
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Camera World.....	Chelmsford
Cardiff Camera Centre.....	Cardiff
Cardiff Camera Centre.....	Newport
Carlisle Sony Centre.....	Carlisle
Castle Cameras.....	Bournemouth
Devon Camera Centre.....	Exeter
Digital Depot.....	Stevenage
Great Western Cameras.....	Swindon

Harrison's.....	Sheffield
London Camera Exchange.....	Bristol (Horsefair)
London Camera Exchange.....	Chester
London Camera Exchange.....	Chesterfield
London Camera Exchange.....	Colchester
London Camera Exchange.....	Leamington Spa
London Camera Exchange.....	Manchester
London Camera Exchange.....	Southampton High Street
Pantiles Cameras.....	Tunbridge Wells
Park Cameras.....	Burgess Hill

Peter Rogers.....	Stafford
Photo Express.....	Ulverston
TCR Sony Centre.....	London
UK Digital Ltd.....	Clitheroe
Warehouse Express.....	Norwich
Wilkinson Cameras.....	Preston
Wilkinson Cameras.....	Southport
York Camera Mart.....	York



Colin Roberts

A specialist in landscapes and nature, Colin Roberts turned professional in 2005. He has received a number of awards for his nature images, including **International Garden Photographer of the Year** and the **Royal Horticultural Society's Photographer of the Year**. Visit www.colinrobertsphotography.com

29 essential winter landscape tips

Four top landscape photographers provide **expert advice** when shooting in the cold

ALL PICTURES THESE PAGES © COLIN ROBERTS

1 Leafless trees in mist or fog

Many deciduous trees have a stark beauty in their leafless form, and make worthy landscape subjects throughout the winter. Those trees growing on hilltops and ridges are usually framed against the sky, so they can be photographed in almost any weather. However, trees that grow in valleys or parkland can be difficult to photograph in isolation, especially if there are buildings or other trees close by. The answer to this is to shoot them in a misty atmosphere, when the mist is thick enough to obscure the nearby surroundings. This effectively sets the tree against a blank canvas. Many trees have an irregular shape or a marked lean, so try viewing them from various angles in order to find the one that is most appealing.



2 Capturing falling snow

For a snow scene with a difference, try shooting while the snow is falling – it's a great way to capture the wintry atmosphere. The key is to pick a suitable subject, so avoid wide-open views where the snowfall effect is lost, and instead build your composition around a strong feature, such as a tree, bridge or small building.

Choice of shutter speed will determine how the falling snow is rendered, so relatively long exposures of 1/8sec or less will show snowy streaks rather than flakes. I prefer to stay at around 1/60sec to capture a slight sense of movement without overdoing the effect. Try to shoot away from the direction of the falling snow and fit a lens hood to help protect your element from stray flakes. This image was shot at 1/80sec.





3 Working on snowy compositions

A snow-laden landscape is such an inspiring sight that it can be tempting to shoot rather randomly, with the result that none of the images really stands out. In these situations it's more important than ever to work on your composition and not to shoot snow for the sake of it – we all know it's better to come away with one or two great pictures than a whole batch of mediocre ones. Remember to isolate the main focal points and use linear elements to add perspective and depth. Also, exploit the simplicity that a blanket of snow brings to the landscape.

Employ a variety of focal lengths, but be careful not to overuse wide angles. There is so much white in a snow scene that the perspective of a wideangle lens can easily overdo it, pulling in large areas of featureless white space that cause the shot to lose impact.



4 Winter details

Ice, frost or snow can transform the look of some natural subjects, bringing a short-lived beauty that shouldn't be missed. Equally, even the most mundane man-made objects can look appealing or quirky when coated in crisp white snow.

So in cold snaps look out for wintry details like the shapes and patterns in frosted leaves, bubbles trapped in frozen puddles, or even snow-clad signposts and fences. A standard 50mm lens will focus close enough for most subjects, while a short telephoto will help you isolate details from a more comfortable distance. Of course, capturing winter details doesn't depend on extreme weather – look for texture in tree bark, the intricate patterns in stalks of bracken, or the colours in moss and lichen – all of which can be shot in any conditions.



5 Shooting contre-jour

From November to January the sun never rises too far from the horizon, making it the ideal time to experiment with backlit subjects. Shooting towards the sun – or contre-jour, as the technique is known – is something we instinctively avoid, but it can produce eye-catching results.

The best approach is to obscure the sun with part of

your subject, as this will effectively mask its brilliance and reduce the risk of lens flare. The result is a dramatic high-contrast image that shows the subject in virtual silhouette. Tilting the camera down slightly will include any shadows that radiate from the subject into the foreground, giving a more dynamic edge to the composition. Vertical structures, such as trees, spires or lighthouses, make ideal subjects for this technique.

6 Planning for snow

A planned approach is a key factor in successful landscape photography. This is perhaps more true in snowy weather than at other times because of the dramatic effect snow has on subject matter, not to mention the fact that it can arrive unexpectedly. So to avoid venturing out at a moment's notice on a snowy morning with no clear idea of where you're heading, it's crucial to make a list of suitable snowy locations so you're prepared.

With an ordered list you can plan your itinerary before setting out, based on the conditions at the time. As always, safety comes first, so monitor local weather reports and be clear on the extent of the snowfall. A dusting of snow soon transforms hills and open areas, but woodlands need more of a thick-snow look to be appealing.

7 Make an early start

Early starts ought to get easier in winter when the sun rises later, although it never feels that way when you have the cold to contend with. However, the tortuous routine can pay dividends – for the light, of course, but also if there's fresh snow on the ground.

Footprints and melting slush can all spoil a snow scene, so set out before dawn if you want pristine views of virgin snow. Available shooting time is extended because a blanket of snow raises ambient light levels by several stops, allowing you to start earlier. It's also worth being on location as soon as you can in frosty conditions before the sun begins to melt away the beauty. Also bear in mind that frost lingers much longer in areas of shadow, so head for the high-points first and leave the valleys and hollows for later.

8 Go mono for snow

By its very nature, snow lends itself well to mono images. With so much colour stripped away and many features reduced to mere outlines, it becomes much easier to focus on shape and form. What's more, many of the best black & white images are of high-contrast subjects, which deliver punchy monochromes with pure whites and solid blacks – so snow certainly fits the bill.

Isolated buildings or trees often have great potential in mono, as do snow-clad walkways and jetties. If you like abstract compositions, then black

& white is always a good option, and no less so in snow. Try creating some simple graphic images by shooting patterns or lines that form in the snowy conditions, using a telephoto lens to crop out surrounding distractions wherever possible – less is more with this type of image.





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Jeremy Walker

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9 Carry spare batteries

Always carry spare, fully charged batteries. Batteries hate the cold and will soon start to drop in power and efficiency. The colder it is, the more quickly the batteries will fade, so combat this by keeping the batteries warm. Don't keep them in your camera bag, which will invariably be close to or on the frozen ground. Instead, keep them in an inside pocket and protected with a soft cloth.

10 Warm up batteries

If you are shooting in winter conditions and the light is fantastic but your battery has failed, completely turn the camera off and remove the battery. Try to warm the battery up in your hands, in

your clothing or in any way you can (except a naked flame). Just a little bit of warmth could give you those crucial extra few frames so you don't miss out on that special shot.

11 Avoid using the rear display

One of the biggest drains of electrical power on a modern camera is using the monitor for everything – live view, image review and even camera settings. In cold conditions, use the monitor as little as possible. You do not have to review every image or check every single histogram. Discipline yourself to using the monitor only once every three or four frames, and use the good old-fashioned viewfinder a bit more often instead.



12 Carry a head torch

A head torch will leave your hands free for the important stuff, such as shooting images or eating chocolate. Not only is it useful to help see the camera settings in fading light, but it will also help you to see your way back to the car – you may go out in bright sunny conditions and not even consider the fact that it will get dark later on. A torch is also a useful distress beacon if you get into trouble – use six long flashes followed by a gap of a minute and then repeat.

13 White balance

Be aware that shooting beautiful snowy landscape scenes with a blue sky will often lead to the shadows becoming dark blue. In the right image this is not a problem, but so often in a winter scene cold blue shadows do nothing for the overall feel of the image. Experiment with the white balance settings: take your camera off auto white balance and perhaps set it to 8,000K for a warmer feel. It will take some experimentation, but just try to get rid of those cold blue shadows.



14 Draw in the snow

If it has snowed and you have nothing to shoot, get drawing in the snow. Use the fresh snow as a blank canvas, from love hearts and smiley faces to snow angels. Consider the direction of the sun first so your artwork will be nicely lit from the side or behind, and try not to walk across your handiwork before you have shot it!



15 Shoot water

If you are struggling for winter subject matter to photograph and you cannot travel far, you will find that there is usually some form of water nearby, even if it is just a pond, puddle or stream. Water is a great winter topic because of the infinite amount of patterns and textures that are created. Think close-up or macro rather than wide landscape. You could create your own puddles and effects by putting trays of water out overnight when it gets really cold. Put leaves (or anything!) in the water and see what sort of patterns, shapes and textures you can shoot the following morning.



16 Solitary colour

Winter scenes can look a bit bare or bland if you are not careful – just far too much white emptiness. Try to introduce a small area of localised colour to give an image a bright focal point and lend some impact or mood to the scene. A single solitary colour, no matter what it is, will give life to the image.



17 Be comfortable

Making life as comfortable as possible for yourself when out shooting is paramount. If you have room, carry a small Thermos flask filled with a hot beverage such as tea, coffee or soup, and carry comfort food such as chocolate or cake. Hanging around in the cold isn't fun on an empty stomach.

18 Dress for the occasion

There is nothing worse than being cold on location – trust me, I know, because as I write this I am in Iceland. Use layers of clothing and not just one big thick garment. Merino wool is a fantastic base layer (look for the Icebreaker brand at good outdoor shops) and build up from there.

Footwear is just as important as coats, jumpers and jackets. With cold feet, you will soon lose the will to hang around and wait for the perfect light. Proper winter boots and two pairs of socks will go a long way to helping you have hours of fun standing around in the snow. Although wellies are good for keeping snow melt and rain water

19 Use filters creatively

Flowing water with snow and ice in the foreground or background, or moving clouds in a winter landscape, are very fertile grounds for the use of neutral density filters. Introduce blur and motion, and experiment with patterns and textures that are created by longer exposures.

out, if you are using them in winter they must be of the Neoprene-lined thermal type, as standard wellies have virtually no thermal properties at all.

20 Snow shoes for tripods

Shooting in soft snow can be a problem as your tripod can just sink in, leaving you with a very short working height. Recent winters in the UK may not have seen huge snow drifts, but if you are shooting where snow is likely both Manfrotto and Gitzo make saucer-sized discs

that fit to the bottom of each tripod leg, enlarging the footprint and spreading the weight. These are also useful for using tripods on sandy beaches to stop them sinking into the wet sand.

21 Add scale

Use human figures to give your winter scene a sense of scale and place, and if they walk into your scene it's easy to get rid of the footprints in post-production. A figure can be distant, silhouetted or colourful, but it will certainly help to tell the story within the image.





Mark Bauer

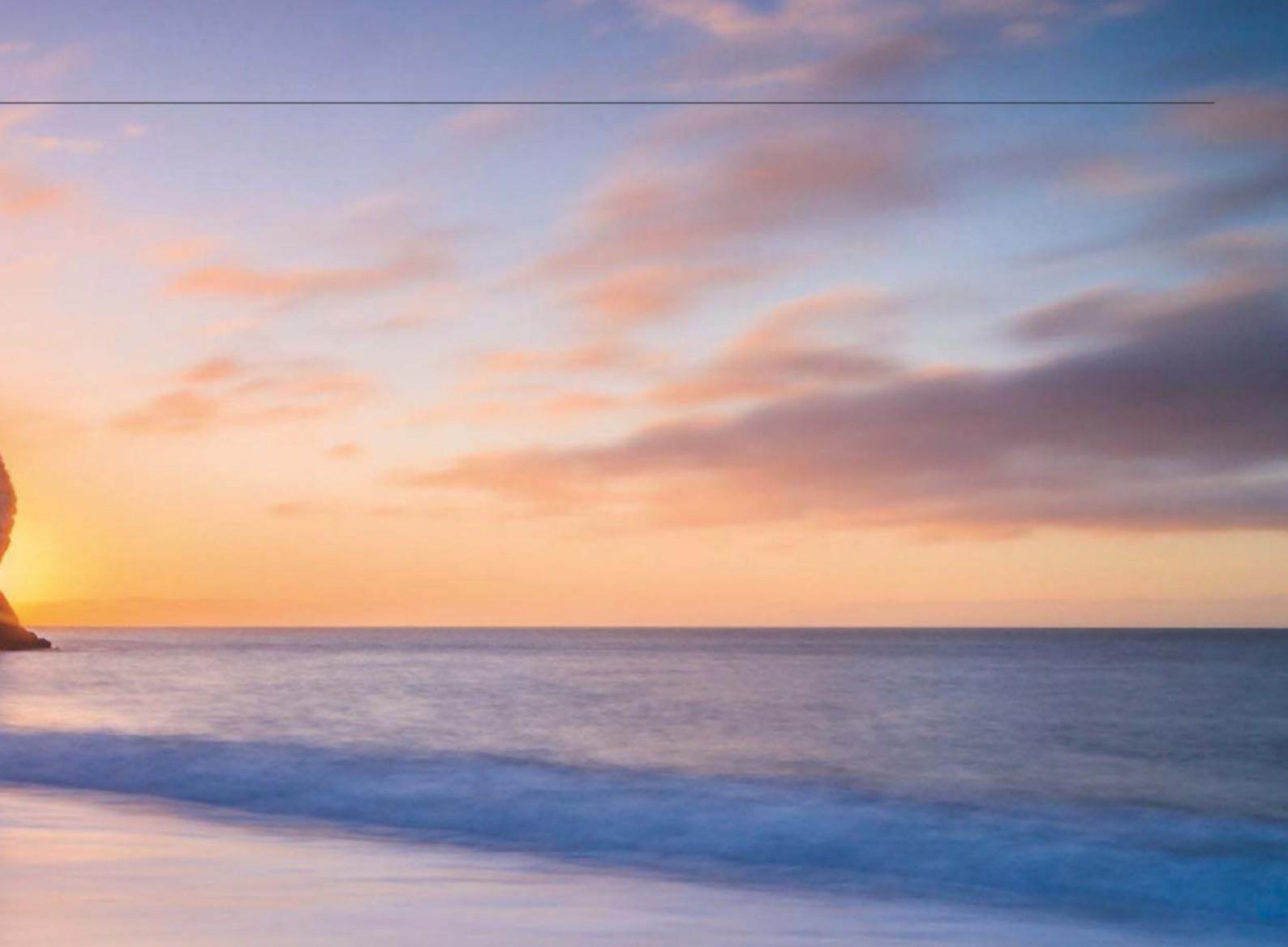
Mark Bauer is one of the UK's leading landscape photographers. Having become interested in photography while living abroad in the early 1990s, he is now renowned for his evocative images of the south-west of England.
www.markbauerphotography.com



22 Look out for unique opportunities

There are certain shots that are only possible in winter, due to the position of the sun. There is a very short window for some opportunities, with certain lighting conditions only lasting for a couple of weeks or so. As you may be restricted by the weather, you need to make the most of any opportunities that arise – and also be persistent. Multiple visits to a location may be necessary. This can be tedious, but remember that you won't get another opportunity at some shots for another 12 months. Use maps and a sun compass, or an app such as The Photographer's Ephemeris, to help you plan.

For a short time every winter, it's possible to shoot the sun rising through the arch of Durdle Door in Dorset. This image took multiple visits over a period of three years before I got the conditions I'd hoped for. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 21mm, 6secs at f/22, ISO 100, Lee 4-stop ND and 3-stop ND grads



23 Protect your gear against the elements

The light and weather can be dramatic in winter, but such weather is not always good for your kit so make sure you protect it. There are plenty of commercially available weather covers, but a good DIY solution is a shower cap, of the kind that is supplied in hotel rooms. If it starts to rain when you've set up, pop it over your

camera and lens, and then remove it when the shower passes. A chamois leather is also good for wiping down your equipment if it does get wet.

24 Make use of moody skies

The weather in winter is often dull, but that doesn't have to mean dull photographs. On a cloudy day, there may not be dramatic light falling on the land, but there can be

plenty of interest above it, with dark, stormy clouds rolling across the sky. In fact, so long there is some texture in the sky, it's possible to create interesting shots. Make sure you give plenty of emphasis to the sky in the composition, and include a clear focal point in the frame. Graduated neutral density filters are usually used to balance exposure differences between bright skies and dark foregrounds, but they can also be used for

artistic effect, turning the appearance of a textured grey sky into a threatening, stormy one.

25 Head to the coast in bad weather

Rural landscapes generally look dreary in dull weather, but coastal shots can still be effective as you can make use of strong structural elements such as groynes and piers, and contrast these with the motion of waves and clouds.



Passing showers can reveal some of the best light in winter, but make sure you have a rain cover on hand to protect your kit if it starts raining

Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 16-35mm, 1/13sec at f/11, ISO 100

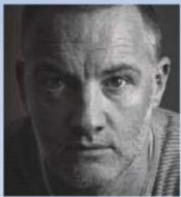


Snow-laden clouds were given prominence in the frame in this Wiltshire landscape. A strong foreground and clear focal point in the background counterbalance the sky
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 24-105mm, 1/80sec at f/16, ISO 100, Lee 2-stop ND grad



It was drizzling when this shot was taken, but the subject, long exposure and mono make for a moody shot
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 17-40mm, 5mins at f/16, ISO 100, B+W 10-stop ND, Lee 2-stop ND grad

ALL PICTURES THESE PAGES © MARK BAUER



Justin Minns

Since taking up photography, Justin's images have been published in numerous books and magazines. He also runs one-to-one landscape photography workshops in East Anglia for photographers of all levels, with workshops for small groups currently in the planning stage. www.justinminns.co.uk



ALL PICTURES THIS PAGE © JUSTIN MINNS

26 Where is the sun?

I'm sure we all have a list of locations we'd like to photograph, and if you're like me there'll be a particular time of year you have in mind for the shot. I usually plan around seasonal weather, when flowers are in bloom or crops are growing, but I also consider where the sun will be rising or setting.

We all know the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, but that's only a generalisation. In the winter, the sun rises south of due east, and its position moves south each day until, on the winter solstice, it rises in the south-east before beginning to move north again. Some places

only catch the first or last light in the winter months when the sun rises and sets in a southerly position, so make a note to visit these places in winter and catch them in the best light.

27 Shorter days, longer hours

For most of the year, the best light is around an hour either side of sunrise or sunset. Once the sun is high in the sky, the light can be too harsh and flat for a lot of landscape photographers' tastes. On short winter days, however, the sun travels on a much lower arc than normal, providing us with a

pleasantly angled light throughout the day. Of course, on some winter days you might not see the sun at all, so make the most of it when you do and shoot all day!

28 Don't listen to your camera

Advanced as they are, the meters built into our cameras basically assume that all subject matter is of 'average' tonality, measuring the light reflected from the scene and averaging it to 18% grey. Most of the time it's accurate enough, but when faced with an expanse of white snow, left to its own devices your camera will underexpose it

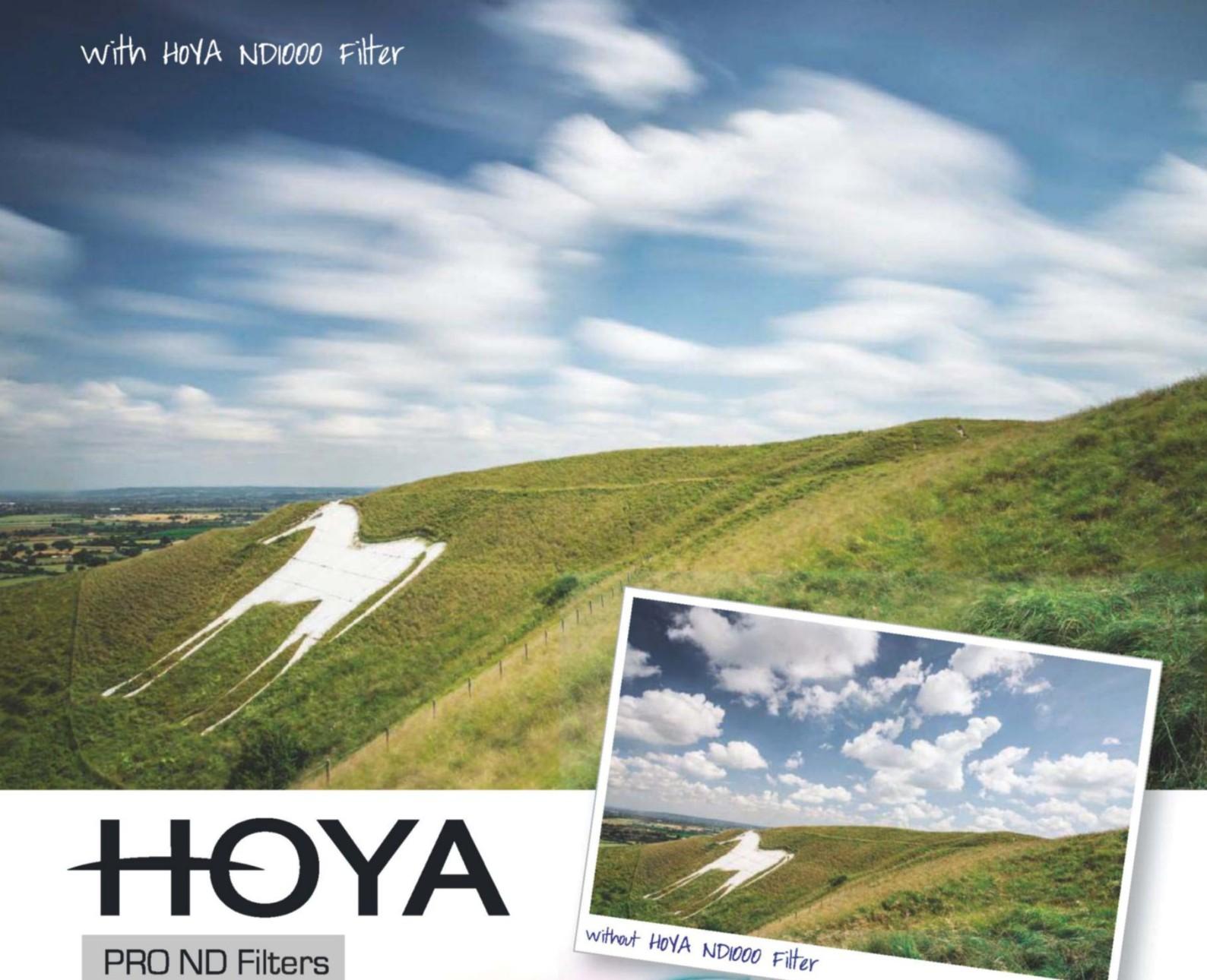
and turn the snow grey. So ignore what your camera tells you, and if you are using one of the semi-auto modes, dial in 1-2EV of positive exposure compensation, or if you are using manual mode decrease the shutter speed by 1-2EV and keep your snow white.

29 Keep it simple

A fresh covering of snow removes all clutter from a scene, making it possible to find simple, graphic compositions, especially when working in mono when the palette can sometimes be literally black & white. Just make sure you get out early for pristine snow.



with HOYA ND1000 Filter



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Covering the world

Few magazines are better known than **National Geographic**. Creative director **Bill Marr** discusses a new book on its iconic covers. He talks to **Tom Smallwood**

While it's still a youngster compared to *Amateur Photographer*, *National Geographic* magazine has been going since 1888, only nine months after the US National Geographic Society itself was founded. It's odd, then, that a compilation of classic *National Geographic* covers has only just been published. The new book is called *National Geographic*:

The Covers – Iconic Photographs, Unforgettable Stories, and we caught up with Bill Marr, current creative director, to find out why it's taken so long.

‘Various compilations of photographs from the magazine have been published, but we decided to do a cover compilation in 2013, during the 125th anniversary celebrations,’ Bill explains from National Geographic’s head office in New York. ‘A lot has obviously changed



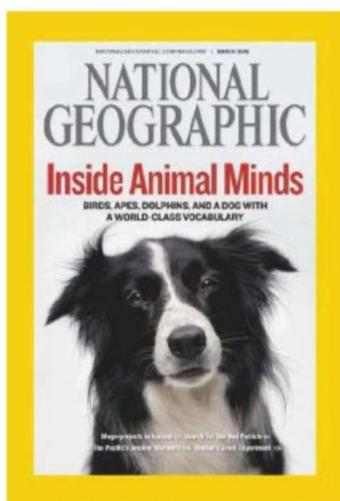
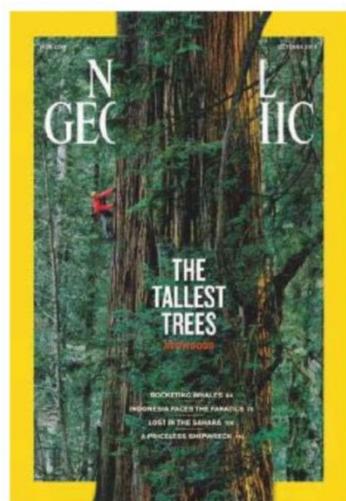
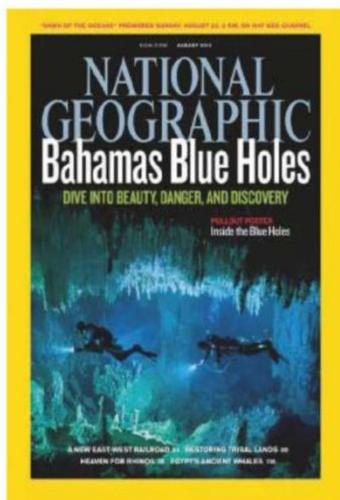
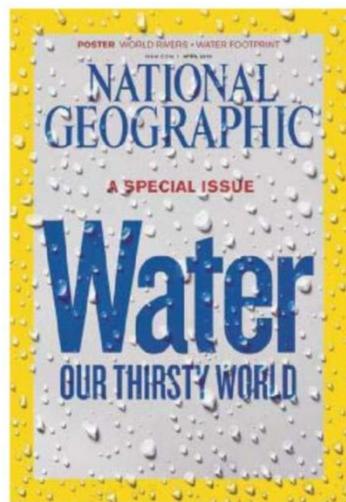
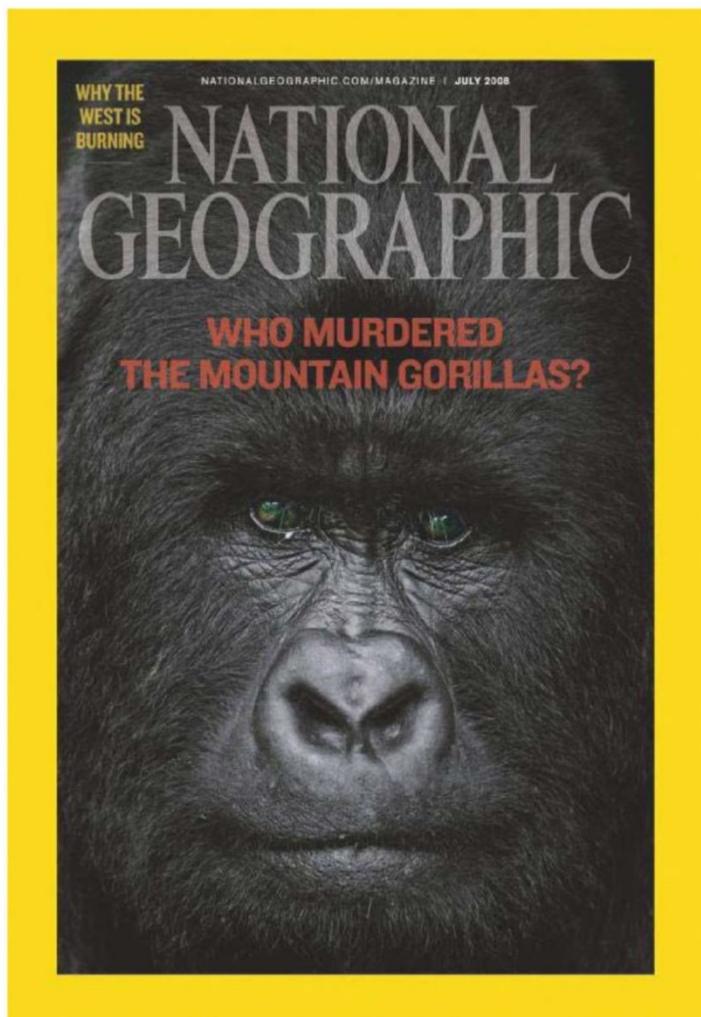
Bill Marr is creative director of *National Geographic* magazine and is responsible for the design and art in the publication

since 1888. Until 1999, the magazine was subscription only, for example, so you couldn't buy it on the news-stand. So we had to go from covers that only needed to look good on your coffee table to covers that would appeal to a broader audience. Recently, covers have been more topical, with bigger type – we've found that ‘grand idea’ covers, such as space or ancient civilisations, seem particularly popular.’

Creative challenges

So photographs are only one design option for the cover of *National Geographic*, but Bill remains a big fan of imagery from a camera. ‘I love it when the photography is very dominant, as with a recent cover story on hero dogs. That was a very proud dog! Shooting for the magazine’s cover is actually quite difficult, as photographers have to break a lot of rules. Our cover is complicated. There has to be space for the main title and cover lines, and the image has to work with a thick yellow border around it.’

As well as the hero dogs, Bill is particularly fond of a series of cover photographs of the Kayapo tribe on



the Amazon, and one about water (see top right). He explains: 'The water cover was particularly challenging as it was on the theme of "our thirsty world". Photographing bodies of water would have been too specific, so we had to come up with a way of making the cover "wet". We ended up photographing drops of water in the studio. It worked well, and all our foreign partners liked it.'

What works in different parts of the world is an important consideration, and often regional editions will run with a different cover to the US one. 'Obviously, a very US-centric topic might not work so well overseas, so it depends,' says Bill. 'Sometimes the UK edition will run with a different cover that is more suited to the region. However, all the editions are printed in the US.'

Give me cover

AP recently broke new ground with a cover image pulled from 4K video footage. Can Bill see *National Geographic* going down this road one day? 'The magazine has always embraced new technology, such as using images from 35mm cameras in the 1950s,' he says. 'So yes, it's

perfectly possible we will run covers from 4K if the image quality is good enough. Ten years ago, 90% of our covers were shot on film, but within 18 months we had flipped to digital, as that is where all our photographers were moving. It makes picture editing a better, more collaborative process and we can share so much electronically.'

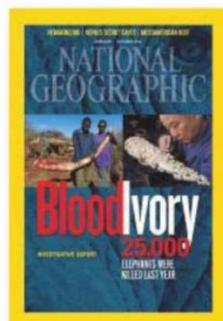
As for editing the cover image, Photoshop tweaks are kept to a minimum. 'We work on colour correction, darken or lighten the background and that's about it,' explains Bill.

Getting a *National Geographic* cover is high on most serious photographers' bucket lists, and Bill is happy to discuss how to make this happen. 'We look for photographers who have a body of work we can build on,' he says. 'Once we see this, we are more likely to put them out in the field. Say we were to do a cover story on climate change refugees. It would be hard to do this from scratch, so we'd work with a photographer who has already looked at this topic. The budgets can be a huge, so we have to be sure the photographer can deliver the goods.'

AP

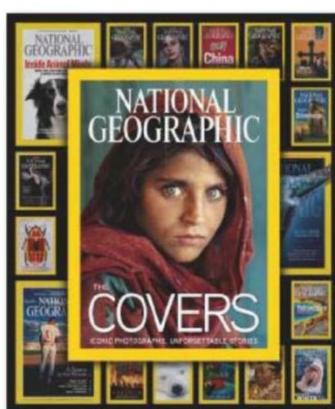
COVER STORY

GETTING the cover signed off involves more than just the editor and chief designer huddling around a Mac. 'The current editor-in-chief and picture editor make the first pass,' says Bill. 'Then it's the chief content officer and the circulation director. We have to make choices for both reach and popularity. Two years we pushed to do a cover on the illegal ivory trade as it turns out the Catholic Church in some Asian countries was involved. We knew it wouldn't be a big seller, but the story mattered.'



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

SINCE publication began in 1888, *National Geographic* has turned to some of the greatest names in photography to provide its covers, including Mike 'Nick' Nichols, Joel Sartore and Steve McCurry with 'Afghan Girl' (right). Many of these have been compiled in the book *National Geographic: The Covers – Iconic Photographs, Unforgettable Stories*, available at shop. nationalgeographic.com and in all good booksellers (RRP £35).



NEW!

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The growing trend with many photographers is the desire to take their studio lights on location. The Interfit Foldable Softboxes offer a **quick setup** for location shoots.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Hit them where it hurts

I write regarding your news item on Rob Riach (AP 15 November) – yet another photographer challenged by security staff in a public place, this time the Princes Quay shopping centre in Hull.

I am an occasional transport affairs writer and about six years ago, while photographing some newly delivered buses operating into the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent, I too was challenged by two overzealous PCSOs, who came rushing to see me after I was obviously spotted on CCTV in the centre's bus station. I was told that photography was not permitted without written management consent and was instructed to delete my images. When I explained it was impossible to do so as I was shooting on 35mm film, they moved me on and instructed me to leave the area.

At the time, I lived just ten

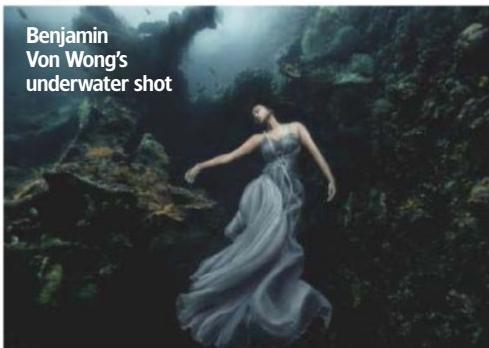
minutes' drive from Bluewater, so it was my local shopping centre. I wrote to the management in protest (I didn't get a response) and told them that, along with the other five members of my household, I would not be visiting the centre again – and have not done so to this day. I realise that in comparison to the thousands of visitors such places get each year, the absence of a handful of patrons does not make that much difference. However, these days, when traditional retail shopping is losing so many customers to online trade, I wonder whether such organisations can afford to alienate even more of their customer base for the sake of heavy-handed enforcement of some rather dubious regulations in the name of 'security precautions'. Food for thought, perhaps?

P Smith, Essex

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With ultra-fast performance, the new Samsung 16GB EVO SD card, Class 10, Grade 1, offers up to 48MB/sec transfer speed and has a ten-year warranty. www.samsung.com

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Water works

In AP 29 November, on page 17, you show an underwater picture, and on page 28 you show us how to fake such a picture. I wonder why anyone would bother with underwater photography, when they can fake it in Photoshop?

**Andrew S Redding,
via email**

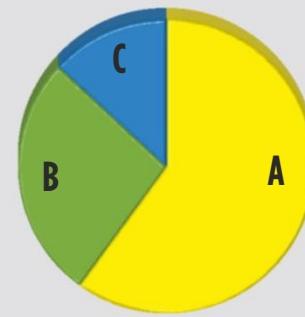
The image on page 28 is not an underwater shot, Andrew. It depicts a woman floating into the sky attached to her

bubble of gum – though I'm sure it's possible to create a passable fake of an underwater shot. However, while many people enjoy the thrill of seeing real fish and real coral with proper underwater photography, this is not within everyone's means and there are many others who derive just as much pleasure from simulating such images using their Photoshop skills. It's horses for courses – Nigel Atherton, Editor

A man's world

I was truly baffled by the conclusion to Jon Devo's review of the Olympus Pen E-PL7 (AP 22 November): 'By marketing it solely at an imaginary, shopaholic, smartphone-using, city-hopping female blogger, they're doing it a disservice. This camera could and should have much wider appeal than Olympus is apparently aiming for.'

I don't believe I've ever read a review in AP where the marketing campaign was



In AP 22 November, we asked...

Would you like to try drone photography if you had the chance?

You answered...

A Yes	60%
B No	27%
C Maybe	13%

What you said

'Yes, please send one to me'

'Certainly would!'

'No, drone photography in the wrong hands can only lead to disaster'

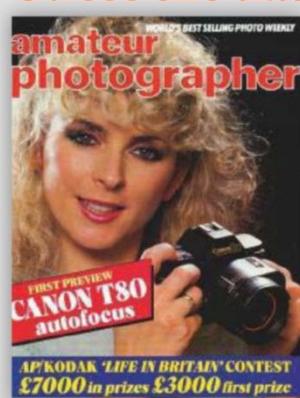
Join the debate on the AP forum

This week we ask

Do you still brave the weather and take landscapes in the winter?

Vote online www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Guess the date



Win! Every week we post an old AP cover on our Facebook page and all you have to do is guess the issue date (day/month/year). The person who is closest to the exact date wins a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99. To guess the date of this cover (above), head over to www.facebook.com/Amateur.photographer.magazine. Forum members can also enter via the Forum.

The 22 November cover was from 21 July 1965. The winner is Gerry Young from Nottinghamshire, who was the first correct entry drawn at random.

Gerry Young, the winner of our Guess the Date competition announced in this issue, was, funny enough, published in that very same issue of 21 July 1965 as the picture of the week. Here is his image.



even mentioned, much less criticised. The assumption that Jon makes is that marketing campaigns featuring male photographers, photographing women, are somehow gender-neutral and don't exclude photographers of either sex, as opposed to adverts like Olympus's, featuring female photographers, which do.

All one has to do is Google 'Photokina girls' to see that photography continues to be a pretty blokey world – it's guys who are photographers, and girls who are models; it's guys who go into conflict zones and dodge bullets like action men to bring you the news, and soccer mums who take naff pics of the kids at home; guys who design the cameras because electronics are so terribly complicated, and girls who like the auto mode for snaps. I think you'll agree that that's a pretty poor state of affairs. **Dr Dennis Low, West Sussex**

I agree that it is a poor state of affairs when women are portrayed as interested only in auto modes for 'taking snaps' rather than the technical aspects of kit. That was the whole point of my conclusion, in which I wrote that Olympus could have marketed this camera on



The Olympus Pen E-PL7 – not just for girls

its merits rather than aiming it so specifically at a fictional young female blogger who just wants to take pictures of her clothes and patterns in her coffee. The marketing would not have warranted a comment had it not been so overtly directed in such a narrow beam; on Olympus's own website for the E-PL7, the opening words are: 'A shopping tour in Paris or Milan is my favourite treat...' and so it continues, without once mentioning a single technical specification.

The E-PL7 is a great camera that, as I wrote in my review, could and should appeal to a much wider audience (both men and women) who want a

good-quality compact system camera – Jon Devo, technical writer

Distraction tactics

With reference to your news article in AP 22 November (*Leica behind iconic war pic set to fetch £14m*), the book *Icons of Photography* mentions that while Khaldei was examining the image, he noticed that the Russian soldier (partly cropped in your photo) had looted watches on his wrist and the propaganda people would not want to show their soldiers as looters. This was partly, if not the main reason, why the photo was altered and the smoke added. I was surprised Bonhams did not mention this.

Vic Sciberras, via email

Contact

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USA \$338.99; Rest of World £221.99.

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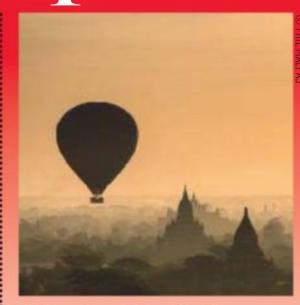
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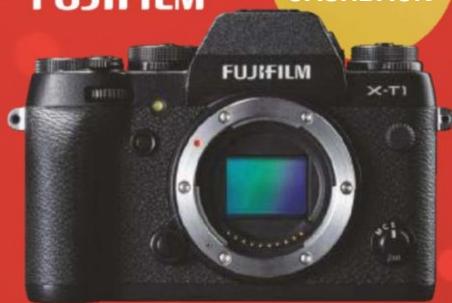
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Lonely planet

Zoltan Bekefy's minimalist landscape images are a haunting exploration of some the world's most visually sparse territories. He talks to **Oliver Atwell** about what it is that drives him to explore these lonesome locations

What do we mean by the term 'minimalism', particularly as it applies to the field of photography? Quite simply, it refers to a style or technique that is characterised by extreme sparseness and directness. Casting your eye over the portfolio of Slovakian photographer Zoltan Bekefy is like witnessing a masterclass in just how this idea can be applied to a visual medium. Zoltan's bare-bones black & white landscape images are notable for the nothingness that pervades them. Armed with a combination of digital and film cameras, Zoltan

stalks throughout the landscape and trains his lens on the empty spaces of Ireland, Norway and any other territory that happens to fit into his idea of a lonely planet.

By Zoltan's own admission, this minimalism that infects so much of his work seems to apply as much to him as it does to his visual output. When asked how he went about producing his small body of panoramic shots, he says, 'That's a really hard question. I guess I never really think about it. It just comes from my mind because I suppose everyone sees the world differently. I can't really give any good advice on this. I'm not a person for talking.'

'Photographers often aren't,' I counter.

'Yes,' he says in his Slovakian drawl. 'That's why I enjoy producing images.'

Anyone with even a cursory understanding of the landscape genre can see that while Zoltan may not be the most articulate photographer when discussing the techniques he employs to capture his landscapes, he is a clearly a photographer who understands just how to draw out the best in his subjects. What it seems to come down to is a combination of passions.

'I have always been an ardent lover of travelling,' says Zoltan, from his



current home in Ireland – a location brimming with lonely landscapes if ever there was one. 'It's something that has been with me for as long as I can remember. When I was growing up in Komárno in Slovakia, I would play football and that would mean we would have to travel all over the country. I saw so much of it. For some reason, I always sat by the window in the bus or plane. In those hours spent travelling, I would look down over the landscapes that were passing us by and it would always amaze me.'

Zoltan is an entirely self-taught photographer, having started digital photography in 2005 – something that entirely changed his perception

about the world. Ever since, he has been exploring scenes of nature both at home and abroad, trying to contain the beautiful and ephemeral moments he finds along the way.

Familiar places

What's notable is that Zoltan's images contain a wide range of subject matter. While the expected images of seascapes and snow-capped mountains are present, we also find more everyday scenes of gulls and trees. In one image, a lone sheep stands on top of a hill (see page 28). But through the lens of Zoltan Bekefy, all these familiar things take on a distinct air of melancholy.

One of Zoltan's panoramic images taken in Nordland, Norway

Of course, this is a result of Zoltan's photographic approach, one that finds him taking his time to exist within the landscape and in many ways getting to know it almost as if he were a studio photographer attempting to get to the heart of what makes his portrait subject tick.

'The ocean is one of my favourite locations to photograph,' says Zoltan. 'You can see it appear again and again in my work. I really enjoy the loneliness when I'm photographing the coastline. I feel a deep sense of concentration, but conversely I feel entirely relaxed. I'm a big fan of music and have two lovely dogs. We often go walking together' 



along the coastlines of Ireland while I have the music filling the air around me. But then, when it's time to photograph, I sit down, close my eyes and relax. I breathe in the atmosphere of nature. As you say, it's like doing portraits or something like that. You have to know the place before you shoot it. You have to live it.'

There is a Zen-like quality to Zoltan's images. In a sense, the photographer meditates upon the scene before lifting his camera to capture the landscape. Then, in the process of framing and composing

his image, he allows the simplicity of the scene to speak for itself. The space in the images allows us to think and, while not exactly fill in the blanks, our mind is free to wander (and wonder) within the emptiness.

Removing the colour from the landscape further emphasises this idea of minimalism. When the distraction of colour is removed from a scene, the viewer is forced to engage with the shapes and patterns that make up the image. Each location is reduced to its most basic elements.

'Everybody starts with a particular

Top left: The isolation of coastal regions inspires Zoltan

Above left: Ireland's diverse landscapes form a large part of Zoltan's work

Above: Despite appearances, Zoltan's post-processing is kept to an absolute minimum

method that works for them,' says Zoltan. 'When I first set out to explore the idea of taking pictures in the landscape, I'd spend hours trawling through various online galleries. But with all that visual material being thrown at me, it was always the black & white images that stood out. This was certainly true of the monochrome landscape images, particularly the ones taken in areas I had previously never had the opportunity to visit. That period of exploring the work of other photographers was a huge motivation for me.'



The process of research

That process of research has clearly stuck with Zoltan in his work. As any travel or landscape photographer will tell you, the vast majority of work that goes into your landscape shoot happens before you even arrive on location. You must arrive at your chosen scene at the correct time, in the right conditions, fully prepared. Planning can potentially take weeks, or even months if the trip is to

somewhere especially exceptional. As Zoltan has already said, you must get to know your location as much as possible before even considering pressing the shutter.

'Everything starts with the travel planning,' says Zoltan. 'The country, the route, the best times to shoot – all these things are important. I always prepare these carefully before I set off. But you also have to be aware that often things turn out differently

'When it's time to photograph, I close my eyes and relax. I breathe in the atmosphere of nature'



Top right: Through the lens of Zoltan's camera, simple everyday scenes take on a haunting aura

Above right: Birds are a recurring theme in Zoltan's images. They are one of the few signs of life in otherwise lifeless landscapes

to how you expect. The conditions aren't always so predictable.'

There are a number of tools to help you on your way. The internet is a wonderful thing. Zoltan identifies Google Maps and Google Earth as two tools that are fairly indispensable in his quest to discover and research locations. And of course in our smartphone era there are countless apps that can help you along the way.

Considering the kinds of locations Zoltan is photographing, the logistics of getting there is also of great focus. How will he get there? At what time will he need to arrive in



► order to set up? Will he have to account for traffic? Will the weather hold? But where most of us would arrive and spend much of our time looking where to shoot from (best vantage point, position of the sun), Zoltan tends to take things in his stride.

'The way I work is that I park my car, strap on my backpack and go for a long walk,' says Zoltan. 'When I find something that catches my attention, I begin to process the scene and consider the composition.'

After the shoot

Readers could be forgiven for assuming that much of the aesthetic of Zoltan's images occurs in post-processing. It's difficult not to be cynical, placed as we are in the age of smartphone apps such as Instagram and Snapseed – software that prides itself on being able to give the images a certain atmosphere through deliberate layers of imperfection and vintage filters (see our feature on iPhone landscape photographer Julian Calverley for a great example of this in AP 26 July). However, Zoltan really is out there in the cold and wet landscapes perfecting his vision of black & white minimalist locations.

'I barely do any post-processing work at all,' says Zoltan. 'In fact, the whole process will take around five, maybe ten, minutes at most – just

Zoltan's kit

WHILE Zoltan claims not to have a typical camera set-up, he does say that there are two cameras in particular that he always has with him: a Nikon D300 and a Mamiya 645 with a standard 80mm lens. There are three types of film that he uses in his Mamiya camera – Ilford FP4 Plus, Ilford Pan F Plus 50 or Ilford XP2 Super. In addition, Zoltan will use ND grad filters and, most importantly, a Lee Big Stopper.

things like the levels in Lightroom. I want to keep that side of my work to an absolute minimum. It's always my aim to achieve the best shot on location. I want everything in-camera. I'm the kind of photographer who is much more interested in spending his time pressing the buttons on his camera rather than on his computer.'

And what of photographers looking to produce images similar to his own. Can he offer them any nuggets of wisdom? Zoltan's response is typically philosophical.

'The thing I always tell people is to use their feelings,' he explains. 'Don't just look for an average topic and then press the shutter. You have to feel the surroundings and you have to



Another example from Zoltan's series of panoramic landscapes

To see more of Zoltan's work, visit his website at www.zoltanbekefy.com

drink it in. You must also understand nature. I think the second thing I would say is to look for inspiration wherever you are. Check out award-winning photos. Go to exhibitions and never be afraid to experiment with new settings, both in terms of locations and the functions of your equipment. Don't be afraid to use your own style.'

So where will Zoltan's style take him next?

'I prefer places that are in the northern regions of the planet,' he says. 'The places there have sad and dark moods. I like places that are abandoned and really wild. I think next I'd really like to visit the icebergs around the Svalbard Islands in the Arctic Ocean or Newfoundland in Canada.'

With that, the conversation concludes, but not before I ask Zoltan if he can select a favourite image to talk about.

'I don't have one,' he says. 'All my images are equally valuable to me.'

It's a fair point. Zoltan's output is extensive, so searching for one single image that sums up the success of his entire body of work must be tricky. While Zoltan may be a man of few words he is, as we can see, a man with a deep passion for the landscape and for his ability to do those scenes justice. Perhaps, in the end, that's all that counts.

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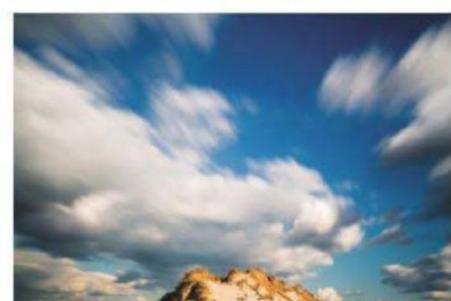
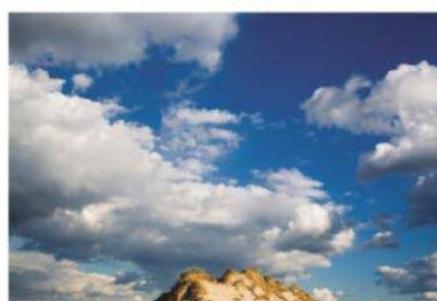


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In this issue we feature one of the rarest Nikon cameras ever made, the F2 DATA camera. There were two versions made for advanced scientific/industrial applications – the F2 Nikon MF-10 36-exposure and the MF-11 250-exposure Data Backs.

The F2 DATA cameras were only available in a black finish with "F2 DATA" engraved beside the serial number. They were sold with either the F2 eye-level (DE-1) the F2A (DP-11) or F2AS (DP-12) Photomic finders. Built into the Data Backs was a high-intensity, short duration electronic flash capable of synchronisation at any shutter speed which allowed you expose your chosen data onto the film. The film is illuminated from the rear via a precision 10mm f/1.8 lens (comprising of 4 elements in four groups). Both MF-10 and MF-11 databacks offer three separate devices for entering data – a clock, a dating unit and memo plates. The memo plates could be used for entering hand-written information such as lens settings, shooting location, type of film, etc.

The design of the MF-10 and MF-11 data backs enables one to superimpose exposure-related information onto the left edge of the frame, including date, time, etc. The F2 Data camera bodies are virtually standard except for two unique elements to ensure the most precise data-recording operation. The F2 Data cameras were supplied with the MD-2/MB-1 Motor Drive unit sets. This example is in like-new condition complete with all original maker's boxes.



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Another brick in the wall

Working cameras have been made from many things, but Lego? They work well, but it's not exactly child's play, as the ingenious **Cary Norton** tells **Tom Smallwood**

Level is one of those products that transcend cultural and national boundaries, and the colourful bricks have occupied generations of bored kids since being introduced in 1932. While *Top Gear* co-presenter James May made a full-sized house from Lego, US photographer Cary Norton has put the bricks to more creative use by making a working Legotron camera. But why, exactly?

'I loved Lego since before I could remember,' Cary explains from his base in Birmingham, Alabama. 'I got interested in photography while at college, and had the idea of making a camera from Lego in August 2009, during the second year of a 'shoot every day, post every day' project. I'd started shooting large format in the previous couple of years, so I decided to try to build a large-format Lego camera. However, I didn't get around to finishing it until about a year later.'

Cary reckons the biggest challenge at the beginning was planning. 'I started out by trying to use the Lego Digital Designer app, but I'm more comfortable with hands-on building,' he says. 'Truth be told, there wasn't much of a plan at all. I knew a camera was really just a couple of boxes, a place for film, and a place for a lens. I just started building. I made a bottom out of the flat pieces (the plates), built around the film holder as best I could and went from there.'

Much more than a toy

When it came to making the Legotron, Cary was forced to roll up his sleeves and improvise. 'In a perfect world, the camera would be 100% Lego and it would be a

Left: Cary's portrait of wedding photographer Ashley Johnson

non-destructive build,' he says. 'I'm sure there's a way to do it, but to get the lens mounted I had to build a lens board out of plates and cut a hole out for the lens. I had to cut off a few of the studs too, to allow the lens flange to fit. Even more difficult was having to rebuild the camera so it would focus to infinity. This is where planning would have helped

The final product of Cary's hard work: the Legotron Mark I

tremendously. It wasn't technically difficult, it was just a pain to do!'

Lego may be associated with kids, but there is nothing childish about the kind of images that Cary makes with his Lego camera. His moody portraits in particular really stand out. 'The Lego camera is best if you have a bit of extra time,' Cary says. 'Technically, it can shoot most things, but I've found it a fun portrait camera. You definitely need to use a tripod, though, and there's a limit to how close you can focus – perhaps a couple of feet. I've never measured it, but I have photographed food on a tabletop before and it was roughly 18–24in away.'

As a keen portrait photographer, Cary admits that he sometimes gets funny looks from his subjects, and sometimes downright incredulity. 'Since it takes a while to get everything ready, by the time I'm about to do the shot they've got used to the camera. The fun part is showing them the image later.'

Have-a-go hero

Obviously, the Lego camera is way more fragile than a conventionally made device and Cary has to be very careful it doesn't fall off the tripod. 'Bricks fall off





Glass act

While making the Legotron caused some headaches at the beginning, Cary's choice of lens made the process of building it a lot easier. 'I found a 127mm lens from an old press camera on eBay, and 127mm translates to 5in – equal to 16 Lego units,' he says. 'All I had to do to make infinity focus possible was to make sure the distance from the lens focal plane was 16 Lego blocks away from the film plane.'

here and there, but they're easy to put back on,' he explains. 'Once I get round to making a second version, I'd love to find a way to add movement, such as rise and fall or tilt and shift. I'll probably seek out specific parts, too. The first version of Legotron was cobbled together out of a friend's blocks. I'd go into version two with a plan.'

Cary is clearly an inventive chap, but he sees no reason why AP readers couldn't make a working Lego camera. 'It's not a difficult build, but knowing the basics of how a camera works goes a long way,' he says. 'You'll need a lens and film holders, obviously. If you could make the whole thing light-tight, you could probably find a way to use a small hole in the bricks as a pinhole lens instead of using a proper lens. I welcome light leaks and unexpected artefacts.'

That's not to say that Cary was slapdash, however, and he did his best to stop excessive light from getting in. 'The walls of the boxes are two units wide, but I would occasionally use 1x bricks instead of

2x bricks and offset them to keep a bit more light out,' he adds.

Foam truths

So has Cary ever thought about making a digital camera from Lego? 'Never seriously,' he says. 'However, Jens Werlein from Germany also built a Lego 5x4 camera and his first exposures were with some sort of digital back – an old Phase One, I think.' Neither has Cary contacted Lego with a view to marketing his Legotron camera. 'I'm sure they could create something way more sophisticated than this camera if they wanted to!' he says.

When it comes to future cameras, Cary is looking beyond Lego. 'Previously, I made an 8 x 10in camera out of foam core to test a lens, and that had interestingly ethereal results,' he explains. 'I'm currently toying with the idea of building a swing-lens digital camera. Think Widelux mixed with a Frankenstein monster of scanner parts. I'm hoping to 3D-print some of that so we'll see how long it takes me to get round to it!'

AP



Cary Norton is a photographer living in Birmingham, Alabama, in the USA. Cary has produced a variety of projects, including constructing a 4x5 camera from Lego. He also enjoys beekeeping, growing beards and then regretting shaving them off. To see more of Cary Norton's work, visit www.carynorton.com



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Appraisal

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AFTER



Picture
of the
week

Woman on the bridge

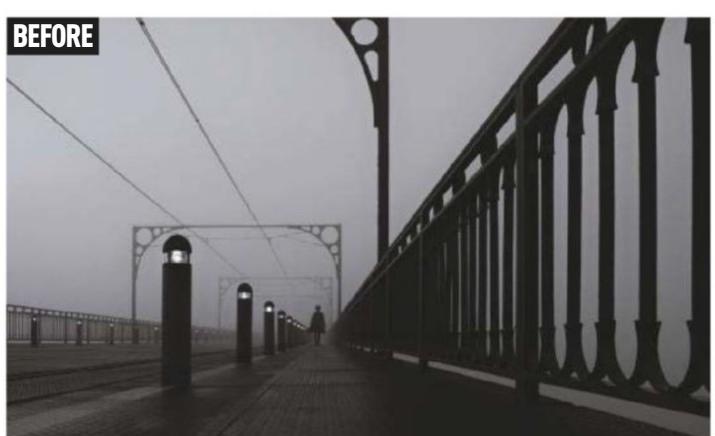
Pessoa Neto
Canon EOS 550D, 15-85mm, 1/800sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

I LIKE this shot very much indeed. I hope it is easy to see why I like it, with those wonderful leading lines that have at least eight attempts at grabbing our attention and fast-tracking it directly to the part of the picture we are supposed to be looking at. Pessoa's low angle works perfectly for lifting the lady just above the greyness of the bridge into the light tones of the foggy sky. The tonal contrast that exists between her and the sky makes her stand out just enough to justify the dramatic fashion in which the lines took us to see her. There is also just enough light tone around

her legs and coat that we can separate her from the background – and the flapping of the hem of her coat makes a very pleasing shape that expressed the speed at which she was walking.

In Pessoa's original, I wonder if the wide-open space to the left of the frame attempts to draw our attention a little too much, so I have applied a moderate crop to remove that and the curve of the central upright, and to help us concentrate on the action. I hope it hasn't removed too much of the build-up, the fanfare, but I also hope you can see why I have tried it.

BEFORE



This is a delightfully atmospheric and well-constructed image Pessoa, and it wins my picture of the week award. Well done.

Pessoa's original image with lots of leading lines (above) and after a crop has been applied on the left and to the central upright (top)



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Bird in tree

Vidyanand
Ayyannan
Shettu

Canon EOS 600D, 75-300mm,
1/320sec at f/5, ISO 100

THE IDEA of taking a picture of a bird in a tree may not sound especially exciting, but here Vidyanand shows us that it is possible, with some photographic creativity, to make something quite interesting from an ordinary subject. By reducing the bird, and the tree itself, to a silhouette, Vidyanand has produced a picture that is full of creepy atmosphere.

Creating a silhouette in this sort of situation is usually quite easy, as the sky is bright enough to fool the camera's meter into making the subject too dark, but even so Vidyanand used the manual-exposure mode to ensure he got the effect he was looking for.

I like that we have the bird's head in profile, and that there is just enough light on its left wing to give us some detail to supplement the outline of the rest of its body.

What doesn't work quite so well is the branch passing through the poor creature's head, and the coloured fringes on the branches in the background that are distracting.

The coloured edges are easy to



AFTER

deal with. As there is no colour in the rest of the image, we can lose these coloured lines just by switching the image to black & white.

The branch through the head is something we needed to fix at the time of shooting, adjusting our position to ensure that such a conflict of shapes and outlines does not occur. When we are concentrating on the subject, focus and exposure it is an easy

thing to neglect, but it is at least as important as each of those other three elements.

I've mocked up a version in which the branch has been removed, and you will see how much clearer the outline of the bird becomes.

It is a well-seen opportunity, Vidyanand, and not enough people look up when they are out shooting, but a few small changes could have made it so much more impactful.



BEFORE

What the image could have looked like (top), with branches and coloured fringes removed

Before the storm

Slava Kurtu

Canon EOS 400D, 18-55mm,
1/800sec at f/10, ISO 400

I THOUGHT we all needed some sunshine, so I've included Slava's rather overheated coastal image to warm us up. This was shot in Ukraine last summer, and the people appear to have prepared for their holiday with a heavy coat of spray tan bought in a bottle fixed with the wrong label. I don't think it is actually their doing, though, and the cursor of blame has to be pointed squarely at Slava for a little too much activity in the colour and contrast departments. We have a rather melodramatic sky, too, and its pre-apocalyptic burden is somewhat at odds with the family day at the beach that is going on at ground level.

My first step involved reducing both contrast and colour saturation,

before trimming off the top-heavy doom with a 16:9 widescreen crop. With that done we are still faced with a problem – that great gaping hole in the middle of the frame. This is one of those pictures that seems to have been taken just before the subject got into position, and the space is waiting for it. When I am feeling pretentious, I call this 'a stage waiting for the actor' – a scene that appears to have no clear subject, but which desperately wants one. To show you what I mean, I've drawn our imaginary friend where he should be – although in real life I would have waited until the lady walking along the beach had passed by before I pressed the shutter release.

All pictures need a subject and we all need to know immediately what that subject is – sometimes that subject has to be a physical thing that stands in the right place in the scene.

AFTER



Slava's image after colour correction and a 16:9 widescreen crop

BEFORE



The original before contrast and colour saturation alterations, and a trim of the top-heavy doom



The 'subject' placed in the middle of the frame to fill the gaping hole that is present in Slava's original picture

Damien Demolder is a photographer, journalist and photographic equipment expert, speaker, judge and educator. He has worked in the photographic publishing industry for 17 years, including 15 years at *Amateur Photographer*. He uses a wide range of equipment, from wooden plate cameras to the latest DSLRs, and is a great fan of all products that make good photography more accessible to more people

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At a glance

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- 100% nylon with fleece lining
- Seven large pockets
- Removable hood with faux fur

COMING from a background of extreme sports, fishing and hiking, Navitas manufactures a wide range of outdoor clothing designed to be both functional and stylish. The Generation Parka is a rifle-green parka-style jacket that is windproof, waterproof and breathable. The outer shell is made from 100% nylon and all seams are taped to ensure they are water-sealed. A 5,000mm breathability and waterproofing rating means this jacket is suitable for up to moderate rainfall. Importantly, the breathability helps to prevent perspiration turning into moisture and making the wearer feel damp – a particular problem when carrying heavy camera gear over long distances.

The seven pockets provide plenty of storage space. The main four are big enough to take a small camera, a medium-sized DSLR lens or a filter kit. The bottom two zip up at the side and are lined with fleece, making them ideal for warming the hands in the colder months.

Verdict

With its dull-green colour, this jacket is very good for blending into the surroundings when shooting wildlife. In use, I found the Navitas Generation Parka backed up everything it claims to be. The breathability is evident, as it never gets too damp inside while also keeping me dry on the outside in persistent rain. The fleece lining makes the jacket very comfortable and warm, although I'd still advise adding layers underneath on very cold nights out shooting.



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Overall, the disk offers a fantastic amount of storage space in a nicely designed case at a good price. While the speeds aren't quite as fast as those offered by a solid-state drive, they are certainly not slow and are more than acceptable for photographers with large numbers of photos to back up. **Richard Sibley**



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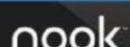
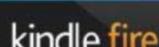


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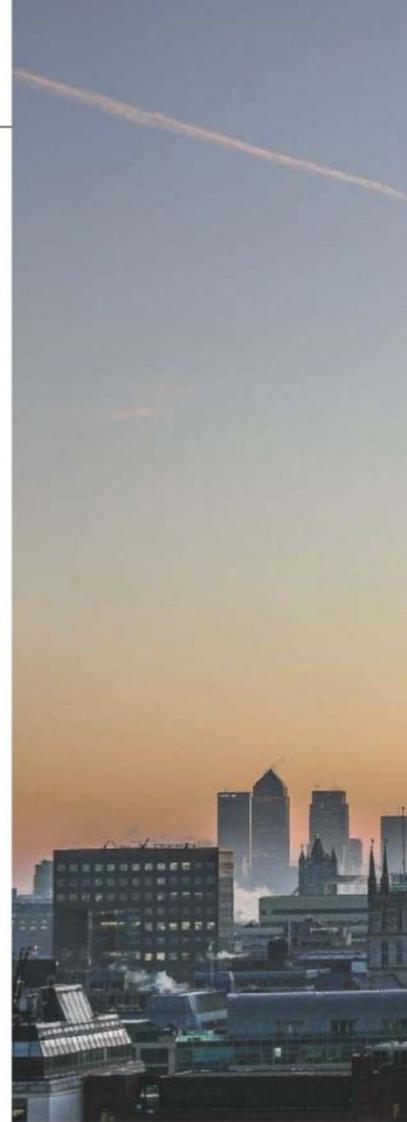
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- 3in, 1.04-million-dot LCD touchscreen
- Price £1,299 (body only)



Samsung NX1

Jon Devo tries out Samsung's new smart camera, featuring the world's first APS-C-sized, 28.2-million-pixel backside illuminated sensor and a host of other exciting specs

For and against

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + High-resolution sensor with good low-light performance + Samsung's fastest image processor allows for 15fps stills shooting + Ultra high definition (4K) video recording + Fast hybrid AF system with 205 phase-detection and up to 153 cross-type points + Robust build and design - Some fiddly controls - JPEG images are too heavily processed by default - Image buffer not large enough |  |
|--|---|

Where in the range



Samsung Galaxy NX

Price £690

Samsung's first Android CSC has Flickr and Instagram apps and a 20.3-million-pixel, APS-C-sized CMOS sensor.



Samsung NX30

Price £550

Similar to the Galaxy NX minus the Android operating system, the 20.3-million-pixel NX30 has an APS-C-sized CMOS sensor and burst mode

Data file

Sensor	28.2-million-pixel, BSI, APS-C-sized CMOS
Output size	6480 x 4320 pixels
Focal length mag	1.5x
Lens mount	Samsung NX
File format	Raw (NEF), JPEG, raw + JPEG
Shutter speeds	30-1/800sec, plus bulb
ISO	ISO 100-51,200 (extended)
Exposure modes	PASM, smart auto (58 scenes)
Metering	Multi, centreweighted, spot
Drive	15fps (with continuous AF)
Movie	4K (4096 x 2160 pixels) 24fps
Viewfinder	2.36-million-dot OLED EVF
Display	3in, 1.04-million-dot Super AMOLED tilting touchscreen
Focusing	205-point hybrid AF system
Memory card	CF Type I, SD, SDHC, SDXC
Dimensions	138.5 x 102.3 x 65.8mm
Weight	635g with battery and card

Andy Westlake, AP's technical editor, described the Samsung NX1 as one of the stars of the show at Photokina 2014, and after handling it myself I agree that on first impressions it appears to be a very exciting camera indeed.

The past 12 months have seen the introduction of some fantastic cameras in both the DSLR and compact system camera categories, including the Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH4, Sony Alpha 6000, Fujifilm X-T1 and Olympus OM-D E-M10. Given this competition, Samsung must do something special to save itself from slipping further behind after failing to make a significant impact on the enthusiast camera market with either the the Android-powered NX smart camera hybrid in 2013, or the DSLR-like NX30 this year.

In the NX1, Samsung has shied away from trying to bridge the smartphone/camera divide and has instead focused on trying to deliver the very best in image-capturing technology – so this is a camera with some truly attention-grabbing specs.

Features

Samsung has developed the world's first-ever APS-C-sized, backside illuminated (BSI) CMOS



The world's first-ever BSI, APS-C-sized sensor captures an impressive amount of detail and colour information

sensor, meaning it should be able to capture more light and deliver better low-light performance than traditional CMOS sensors found in other APS-C cameras. Previously, the largest sensors to feature BSI sensor technology were the 1in-type units found in cameras such as Canon's PowerShot G7 X and the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100 series, so it's a noteworthy achievement for Samsung to have created the 28.2-million-pixel, BSI, CMOS APS-C sensor that sits at the heart of the NX1. As well as being the most innovative, it's the highest-resolution APS-C camera currently on the market, and Samsung has decided not to include an anti-aliasing filter.

To further boost the NX1's low-light capabilities, the camera also has a native ISO sensitivity range of 100–25,600, extendable to 51,200. Samsung's new DRIMe V multi-core processor gets its first run out in the NX1, and according to the manufacturer, it's almost 3x faster than the DRIMe IV. The extra processing power means the NX1 is capable of shooting full 28.2-million-pixel-resolution images at up to 15 frames per second with continuous autofocus, which is significantly faster than even the flagship press/sports

DSLRs from Canon and Nikon. If that's not impressive enough, how about the fact that the NX1 uses a hybrid autofocus system with 205 phase-detection AF points, 209 contrast points and up to 153 cross-type detection sites covering almost 100% of the frame?

The DRIMe V processor is UHS-II and UHS-I SD-card-compatible and its processing speed opens up the possibility for DCI True 4K (4096 x 2160-pixel) 24p video recording internally, as well as 4K UHD and full HD video. Advanced filmmakers will also be pleased to learn that the NX1 uses easy-to-work-with H.264 compression and is capable of outputting a 4:2:2 8-bit 4K signal via HDMI cable to an external device.

Although we're still a little while away from 4K recording becoming the standard for video and display, Samsung has made it possible to play back 4K footage through HDMI 1.4 or 2.0, or wirelessly transfer UHD-quality video to its own UHD monitor. However, I do expect 4K displays to become a lot more common over the next year.

Another intriguing wireless capability of the NX1 is live streaming of full HD footage from the camera. There will be limited uses for such a feature among the

general consumer population, but it is a feature that may be attractive in events and other professional settings. Beyond UHD playback, 4K video recording can have some benefits for stills photography as well, as we demonstrated in AP 20 September when a still image taken from a 4K recording was on the front cover of the magazine.

Build and handling

I genuinely like the look and feel of this camera, with Samsung taking a mostly clean, no-nonsense approach to its design. The NX1 makes a solid first impression in the hand, with its perfectly ergonomic grip providing a firm holding experience and well-placed control buttons that are easy to operate while shooting. The exposure mode dial has the usual PASM settings, an auto mode, a smart mode and two custom options.

The rest of the camera looks streamlined and designed for simplicity. There are, however, some decent customisation options with the controls we do have that make it possible to configure just about every regularly used feature to the buttons at your fingertips. Plus, there's the ability to quickly make settings adjustments using the

quick menu and touchscreen.

In short, Samsung has made every attempt to make this camera work for as many conceivable personal preferences as possible, and it's done so without completely covering the camera in buttons. My only issue with the controls is the minuscule size of the four secondary control buttons on the left shoulder. Samsung could, and should, have adopted Nikon's approach, providing larger, more accessible four-way buttons that cover the top of the shoulder dial, rather than the stylised thin slithers that they are. Otherwise, this is an easy camera to configure and shoot with, and is suitable for both experienced photographers and newcomers alike.

For a compact system camera, though, the NX1 isn't particularly compact. Measuring 138.5 x 102.3 x 65.8mm and weighing 635g, it's comparable in size to the Nikon D7100 DSLR, which also has a magnesium-alloy frame, although it does weigh an extra 130g. However, the high-quality build of Samsung's Premium S lenses will add to the heft of using the NX1. The 16–50mm f/2.8 Premium S lens will, for example, increase the weight of the camera by 622g. I don't want

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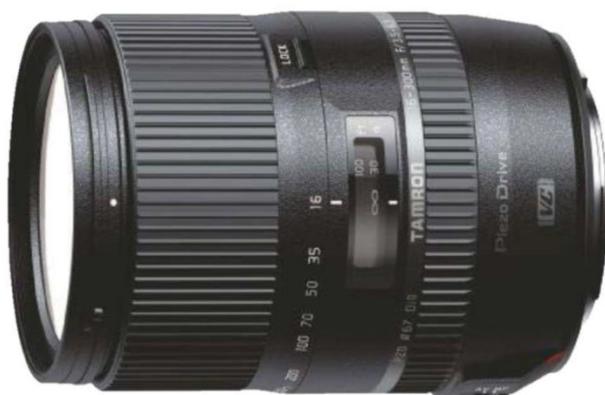
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Focal points

Apart from having the first APS-C-sized BSI CMOS sensor, the NX1 has a lot more features to offer

Body

The NX1's tough magnesium-alloy frame is resistant to dust, water splashes and bumps.

Autofocus

With its fast burst-mode shooting at 15fps in continuous AF, the NX1 is ideal for shooting fast-moving subjects.

Connectivity

Super-fast IEEE 802.11ac wireless protocol allows streaming of 4K video and transfer of large still and full HD files. The NX1 is the first CSC with Bluetooth.



Touchscreen

Setting focal and exposure settings separately on the responsive 1.04-million-dot AMOLED LCD screen makes shooting at awkward angles easy.

Control

The button layout and customisable options are well thought out, making this an easy camera to pick up and get accustomed to.



JPEG processing can clip highlights such as those on the singer's face above

any of this to sound like a complaint – I just think it's important to highlight that the NX1, although classified as a compact system camera, is relatively heavy and DSLR-like in size.

The NX1's electronic viewfinder is one of the best we've seen, with a 2.36-million-dot XGA OLED display and an almost imperceptible lag of 0.005sec. Given the lack of delay, and its ability to show advanced shooting information and assistance such as manual focus peaking with up to 5x magnification, I dare say this EVF is better than more traditional optical units typically found in DSLRs.

Using the NX1's 3in, 1.04-million-dot FVGA Super AMOLED touchscreen display is also a pleasure, with colours and detail rendered superbly while composing frames. Using the screen to adjust settings is quick and responsive, with everything laid out in an attractive and uncluttered user interface. It's also possible to focus and shoot by touching the screen. Both are highly useful capabilities, particularly when using the LCD's tilting function.

Performance

The first thing you do when you get your hands on a camera capable of rapid-fire continuous shooting is, of course, to point it at anything and hold down the shutter release until it slows up. Impressively, the Samsung NX1 can fire off full-resolution JPEGs at 15 frames per second for about 5secs with continuous AF, which makes it incredibly hard to miss a shot during more practical scenarios. In raw, the buffer drops to 20 frames.

After satisfying the irresistible urge to play machine gun with my camera, the second thing I wanted to see the NX1 do was capture

shots in low light, given that it has a the world's largest backside illuminated sensor. The camera itself doesn't feature image stabilisation, although there are lenses in Samsung's line-up that do, such as the 16-50mm f/3.5-5.6 Power Zoom and its premium relation, the aforementioned 16-50mm f/2-2.8 Premium S. Armed with the 16-50mm f/2-2.8 Premium S, I was able to shoot handheld in low light and test out the practicalities of capturing night-time cityscapes.

I took a range of images from the same vantage point using shutter speeds as low as 1/25sec. I probably could have gone a little bit lower in hindsight, but I noticed an interesting quirk when seeing how the camera dealt with noise at different ISO settings. At ISO 1600, JPEGs suffer from smoothing, which removes valuable detail information. Thankfully, though, it appears to be more sophisticated than the noise-handling efforts of previous Samsung cameras I've used. However, at ISO 6400 the additional noise seemed to help to redefine some of the detail lost in JPEGs taken at lower ISO sensitivity settings, producing images that were sharper and truer to the night-time scene in front of me. The NX1 shows definite improvement in this area over its predecessors, and as a result I would be happy to print from JPEGs taken straight from the camera at sensitivities up to perhaps ISO 6400. However, shooting raw is definitely advised in low-light and high-contrast situations as the camera's JPEG processing can struggle with clipped highlights and crunched shadows. When shooting raw, you can ensure that vital image

 data is captured.

Some compact system cameras have a tendency to oversharpen images in order to try to feign image detail, but the NX1 seems to take a more measured approach than we've come to expect from previous Samsung models. Straight out of the camera, JPEGs show a good level of detail without too much sharpening at all. Colour and white balance are as good as we expected and faithful to the scene in most instances. However, when faced with a lot of red tones, the camera's processing system leaps at them when left to its own devices in auto white balance, producing a pronounced colour cast.

Autofocus

The NX1 features Samsung's hybrid AF III system. AF III is capable of AF sensitivity in lighting conditions as challenging as -4EV, and in practice it performed well. Provided I was using a fast lens, I didn't experience the camera hunting continuously for focus in low light, and I was impressed by the speed with which it managed to hone in on focal points. In particularly low-light scenarios, the camera is equipped with a bright green pattern AF assist beam with a range of up to 15 metres, which works in almost total darkness.

According to Samsung, the NX1 is capable of focusing in as little as 0.055sec in ideal conditions, making it one of the fastest cameras currently on the market. When combined with the right lens, the NX1 is blisteringly fast, latching onto points of interest wherever they fall in the frame. If AF-on is held or the shutter is half-pressed, it does a good job of sticking with a subject and maintaining focus. I typically shoot with single point AF in the centre of my frame, but multi-area AF with the camera's sophisticated hybrid AF system also works very well, particularly in action scenarios. Face detection AF and self-portrait modes are also available.

Touch focusing is just as responsive and works very well when using the LCD screen at otherwise awkward shooting angles. I like the fact that Samsung has introduced some of the touch-photography features available in a number of smartphones, such as the ability to touch two different areas of the screen to achieve separate focusing and exposure readings.

Lab results

Andrew Sydenham's lab tests reveal just how the camera performs

WITH its 28-million-pixel, backside illuminated sensor, the NX1 offers some of the very best image quality we've seen from an APS-C camera, particularly at low ISOs. With no optical low-pass filter to sap the sharpness, it offers exceptional levels of detail, and while it's not dramatically ahead of its rivals with 24-million-pixel sensors, it's still probably the most detail we've seen from an APS-C-sized sensor.

Increasing the ISO naturally results in more noise, but the NX1 still compares quite well with other APS-C cameras, offering perfectly usable images at sensitivities up to about ISO 1600 before noise starts to have a serious impact. The next couple of settings – ISO 3200 and 6400 – are still quite acceptable, but the highest ISOs start to look very noisy indeed and should only be used when there's no other option. In fact, ISO

51,200 is barely acceptable at all, but this is pretty much standard for an APS-C camera.

Dynamic range is very creditable at low ISOs, and it's possible to pull up a good amount of shadow detail without running into huge problems with noise. As usual, it decreases at higher ISOs, and shadow detail starts to deteriorate visibly at ISO 3200. Overall, Samsung has done an impressive job with the NX1's new sensor.

Resolution



The NX1 cleanly resolves over 4000l/ph on our Applied Imaging test chart at base ISO, making it the highest-resolving APS-C camera we have tested. Resolution gradually falls – and artefacts increase – as the sensitivity is increased, but it's not until ISO 6400 that any serious deterioration occurs. Beyond this, though, noise rapidly destroys detail, with resolution dropping to 2800l/ph at ISO 12,800, and about 2200l/ph at ISO 51,200. These tests used the Samsung 85mm f/1.8 lens at f/5.6.

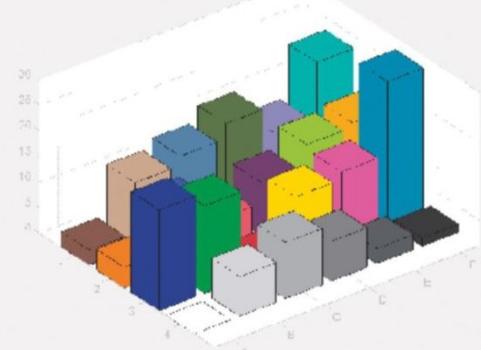
Dynamic range



Despite its high pixel count, the NX1's sensor shows excellent dynamic range, presumably thanks to its backside-illuminated design. Our Applied Imaging tests show an impressively high dynamic range of 12.6EV at ISO 100, and this holds up well at lower ISOs. But it starts to fall off quite quickly past ISO 1600, indicating that shadow regions in particular will become increasingly noisy. Sensitivities of ISO 12,800 and higher offer distinctly low dynamic range, so they won't be very usable.

Colour

This 3D graph illustrates the shift from the reference colour to the photographed chart: the higher the peak, the greater the shift from the original. In the default JPEG colour setting, the NX1 delivers bright and strongly saturated colours, giving a fairly punchy but still quite natural-looking rendition. Contrast is relatively high in the highlight regions, meaning that the paler tones in this test are rendered a bit lighter compared to other cameras. Colour settings can be adjusted in the camera's Picture Wizard menu, with modes such as Vivid and Portrait on offer.



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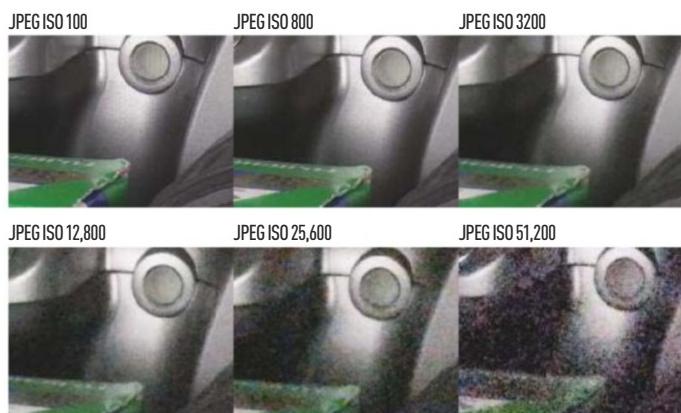
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Noise

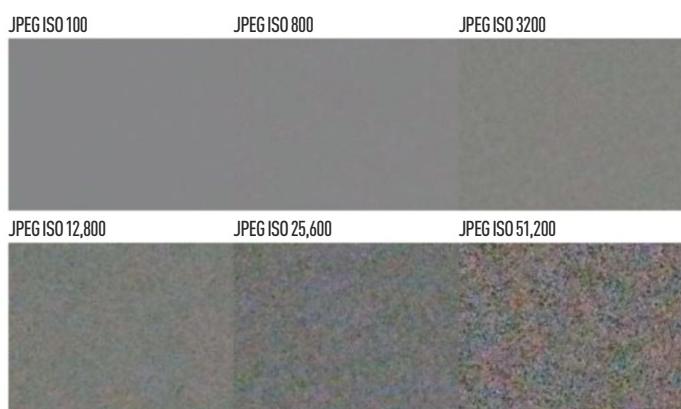
Both raw and JPEG images taken from our diorama scene are captured at the full range of ISO settings. The camera is placed in its default setting for JPEG images. Raw images are sharpened and noise reduction applied, to strike the best balance between resolution and noise.



The images above are printed at a resolution of 300ppi, reflecting a high-quality print. At low ISOs the NX1 delivers impressively clean, detailed images that match or surpass any other APS-C camera we've tested. Noise creeps in, and the finest detail visibly starts to suffer, at around ISO 1600. Things then go downhill quite quickly, and while ISO 3200 and 6400 are quite usable for less-critical applications,

sensitivities of ISO 12,800 and higher are marred by high levels of chroma noise.

Adobe Camera Raw does a vastly better job of dealing with high ISO noise than the camera's JPEG processing, and gives much more usable results at ISO 3200 and higher. Even ISO 12,800 isn't too bad, and carefully processed ISO 25,600 could be acceptable for small output. However, ISO 51,200 is still probably a step too far.



The grey-card images above are JPEG files shot with the NX1's default noise-reduction and colour settings applied. The images are printed at 300ppi to reflect the noise that would be experienced when printing at high quality. The NX1's files are extremely clean at ISO 100, and while luminance

noise increases as the sensitivity is turned up, images remain pretty clean-looking in print up to ISO 1600 at least. Chroma noise becomes quite obvious at ISO 6400, giving visible colour blotching, and then increases dramatically at higher ISOs. The top two sensitivities are very noisy indeed.

The competition

Nikon D7100

Price £770 (body only)
The D7100 has a lower-resolution 24.1-million-pixel CMOS sensor and fewer AF points – 51 to be precise. But in common with the NX1, it has a magnesium-alloy chassis with weather-sealing and no anti-aliasing filter.



Canon EOS 7D Mark II

Price £1,600 (body only)
The EOS 7D Mark II is well equipped for video and shooting action with advanced dual-pixel 65-point AF tracking and 10fps shooting. It also has audio and microphone sockets. Dual memory card slots are an advantage.



Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH4

Price £1,200 (body only)
The GH4 was the first consumer camera to introduce 4K filming and has a number of other advanced video features. Its 16.05-million-pixel sensor takes quality stills up to 12fps.



Sensor	24.1-million-pixel, APS-C CMOS	20.2-million-pixel, full-frame Exmor CMOS	16.05-million-pixel, micro four thirds Live MOS
Focal length range	100-25,600 (extended)	100-51,200 (extended)	100-25,600 (extended)
Mount	1.5x	1.6x	2x
AF points	F mount	EF/EF-S	Micro four thirds
Viewfinder	51	65	49
Dimensions	3.2in, 1.23-million-dot TFT LCD	Tilttable 3in, 1.04-million-dot TFT LCD	3in, 1.04-million-dot TFT LCD
Weight	0.94x pentaprism	1x pentaprism	2.36-million-dot OLED EVF
	135.5 x 106.5 x 76mm	148.6 x 112.4 x 78.2mm	133 x 93 x 84mm
	765g	910g	560g

Our verdict

SAMSUNG is a brand known for its innovation. However, despite swallowing up television, smartphone and tablet market share, the company has had a much tougher time trying to make a significant impact on the camera world, at least beyond small digital compacts. This is partly because Samsung's cameras have simply not been good enough in the face of direct competition. However, I also attribute a large part of the challenge the company faces, at least in the UK and Europe, to the fact that the Samsung brand hasn't ever produced a camera that positions itself in line with the requirements of serious enthusiast and professional photographers – until now.

The Samsung NX1 is highly

promising. It's a true hybrid camera that is well connected through some of the fastest ports and wireless technology currently available, while its 28.2-million-pixel BSI CMOS sensor sets a new standard for APS-C with resolution performance outstripping any other sensor of this size. This is aided by Samsung's decision to not to use an optical low-pass filter. To get more detail than this, you'll need to step up to a 36-million-pixel full-frame model such as the Sony Alpha 7R or Nikon D810. High ISO performance is good too, especially if you shoot raw.

When we received the invitation to the NX1 launch announcement we were told to expect something special, and I must say that after using the NX1 for myself, I'm inclined to agree.



FEATURES	9/10
BUILD & HANDLING	9/10
METERING	9/10
AUTOFOCUS	9/10
AWB & COLOUR	8/10
DYNAMIC RANGE	8/10
IMAGE QUALITY	8/10
VIEWFINDER/LCD	9/10



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Rally action

The new **Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM|S**

has caused quite a stir among wildlife and sports photographers.

Michael Topham uses it in the forests of North Wales to find out how it performs

At a glance

Price: £1,499

Mounts: Canon, Nikon, Sigma

Lens construction: 24 elements in 16 groups

Diaphragm blades: 9

Maximum aperture: f/5-6.3

Minimum aperture: f/22

Minimum focusing distance: 260cm

Filter size: 105mm

Dimensions: 121 x 290.2mm

Weight: 2,860g

As I place my order for a bacon sandwich and try to overcome my disappointment at leaving my Thermos flask at home, I prepare for the day ahead and attach the brute that is the new Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM|S to the front of my Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Anxious about resting the padded lens cover nose-down in thick mud, I crouch down, upturn the lens, and secure



my Arca Swiss plate to the lens's permanently attached tripod collar before returning the heavy combo to my backpack. It's bitterly cold and I'm shivering – not even the numerous layers and two pairs of socks I'm wearing seem to be helping. As I glance up to my left to observe the moon peering through the spruces of Clocaenog Forest deep in North

Wales, I urge the sun to make an appearance to warm me up. An hour later, it finally emerges as I navigate to a vantage point from which to photograph rally cars tearing through a water splash. The stage is set, I'm in position and I can't wait to start shooting one of my favourite motorsports with a lens I've been yearning to test since its launch in September.

Within moments of pulling the camera and lens out of my backpack, I'm on all fours, fingers searching through the mud, trying to find the tiny screw



The fairly slow maximum aperture of f/5-6.3 means you'll have to rely on pushing your camera's ISO sensitivity at times. This shot was taken at ISO 1600



The optical stabiliser was set to mode 2 to capture this panning shot of a wheel

► that dropped out of the lens hood as I loosened it ready to inverse and reattach it. Without this screw, I have no way of securing the large metal lens hood to the front of the lens, and no way of protecting the huge front element from damage as stones and debris are flung towards me. I can hear the first car approaching, and if I don't find the screw soon I'll have to gaffer tape the hood on.

In the nick of time, my fingers stumble upon the screw and I fasten the hood in a frantic panic. 'You won't want to risk removing that again today,' an intrigued photographer beside me comments. And I didn't. With no time to support the lens on my monopod, I resort to flicking the optical stabiliser to mode 1 for general shooting and set the focus distance switch that's positioned above to 10m to infinity, which will prevent the lens attempting to focus closer than I need.

With my 5D Mark III's drive mode

set to continuous, autofocus set to continuous (AI servo) and case 1 set as my AF sensitivity (the camera's versatile multi-purpose setting), I knock back the lock switch that's helped prevent the lens creep to full telephoto in the time it's been carried over my shoulder. Supporting the lens with the tripod collar resting on the palm of my hand, I start to zoom in to compose my first shot. The zoom ring operates in just over a quarter turn, but, supporting it the way I am, I'm finding that I have to twist the zoom ring in stages to get it from 150mm to 600mm. I put this down to the physical effort involved in moving such heavy optics across such a long focal length – the result of a complex internal construction made up of 24 elements in 16 groups.

Supporting it in my left hand just behind the lens



hood is a much more comfortable way of holding the lens at full telephoto, and makes it feel better balanced and less front heavy. Pulling the front of the lens back towards the camera exploits the potential of being able to push/pull to zoom in and out, just as users of Canon's EF

100–400mm f/4.5–5.6 L

IS USM lens will be accustomed to. The difference here is that while it's consistently smooth throughout the range, the push/pull mechanism of the Sigma requires a lot more effort. It is 1,480g heavier than the Canon, after all.

As I set the zoom to

180mm to give myself every chance of freezing the action at

the maximum aperture of f/5, I discover the lens closes to f/5.6 from 180mm–310mm and operates at f/6.3 thereafter up to 600mm. Locking the zoom ring reveals it can also be locked at 200mm, 250mm, 300mm,

400mm, 500mm and 600mm, and I value the way this lock can be easily unlocked again with a sharp twist of the zoom ring or a sharp pull or push of the front of the lens, except when it's locked at 150mm.

As the first car screams into view, I squeeze the shutter and rattle out a burst of eight shots at 6fps. Of these eight, six are showing as sharp on the rear screen – a not bad 75% success rate given the car was approaching head-on at a speed in excess of 60mph.

So how does this AF speed compare? Is it quick? A quick swap back and forth between the Sigma and Canon 100–400mm f/4.5–5.6 L IS USM that I have in my bag reveals that the Sigma is just as fast as the Canon in terms of its lock-on speed. That said, the Sigma isn't faultless and has sporadically hunted for focus – most notably when I've focused at a long focal distance and then attempted to focus much closer, or vice versa. As for the sound of the AF, the lens goes about its business in a nigh-on silent manner, much like other Sigma lenses with a hyper sonic motor.



The vast hood is made from metal and has a rubber tip for maximum protection



This is the third shot of a burst of eight frames taken at 6fps to capture the splash. Incidentally, this shot was taken seconds after finding the lost lens-hood screw that had fallen out

'After 30mins of virtually non-stop shooting, handholding the 2.86kg monstrosity is starting to take its toll'

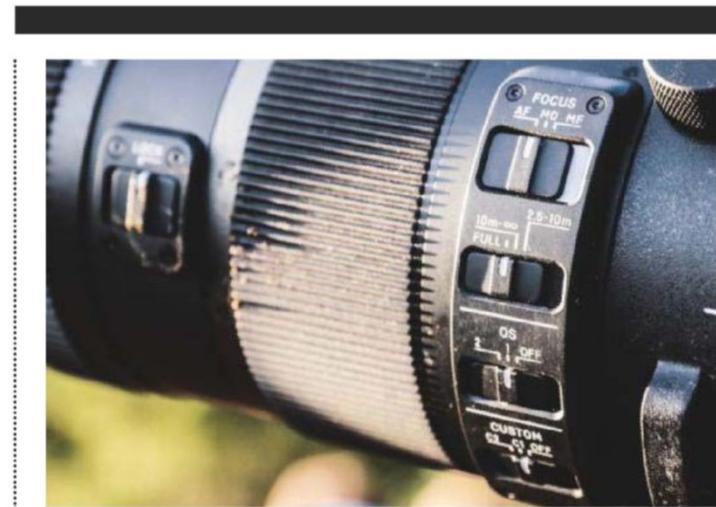
Three more cars pass by and as I glance down at the lens I realise it's caked in splatters of mud. Although not such an issue today, its dust-proof and splash-proof construction will be particularly useful for the demands of professionals who find themselves shooting in the rain. Also, the addition of an oil-repellent coating on the front and rear lenses is designed to make them easier to clean, which I can't fault as I give the huge front element another wipe with my lens cloth between shots. Some users may want to add an extra layer of protection in the form of the UV WR filter, but the large 105mm filter thread means an additional expense of £159 – a price worth paying, I'd say, in order to keep it in pristine condition.

After 30 mins of virtually non-stop shooting, handholding the 2.86kg

monstrosity is starting to take its toll. I'm fighting to keep the camera steady at 600mm and my arms are failing from fatigue. There's little option but to pull out my monopod, which takes the weight off and lessens the risk of camera shake.

As the action continues, I'm interested to learn how well the lens is performing optically, and I soon find myself firing off a series of shots covering different focal lengths between the maximum aperture of f/5 and the minimum aperture of f/22.

Analysing the corners of the images on my MacBook highlights severe vignetting at 600mm throughout the aperture range. There's less cause for concern at the wide end, with virtually all traces dispersing by f/8, but users will want to enable the relevant lens profile correction when Lightroom and Camera Raw supports it. Chromatic



Switches

THERE are five switches on the barrel of the lens. Between the two large rubberised zoom and manual-focus rings is the lock switch, which can be engaged at eight focal-length settings.

Behind the focus ring are a custom switch, a switch to set the optical stabiliser to mode 1 or 2, a focus distance switch, and, above this, the AF/MF switch that can also be set to manual override – MO on the lens. By setting it to the MO position, it switches to

manual focus by rotating the focus ring even during continuous AF. Using the optional USB dock, it's even possible to adjust the override position's sensitivity.

In use, all the switches operate with a reassuring click and have a slightly raised profile to make them easier to locate. The autofocus and lock switches also reveal a white background when they're fully forward, which acts as a visual aid to the user when operating the lens in low light.

aberrations are handled exceptionally well, but it's the sharpness of the lens – noticeably so at the corners of images at both ends of the zoom when the lens is wide open – that impresses most. The optimum sweet spot is found around at f/8-f/11, after which sharpness gradually drops away beyond f/14.

A few hours later and after a long walk down the stage, I take to carrying the lens by its tripod collar. Loosening the collar via the large knurled knob and rotating it by 180° reveals that it notches accurately into place every 90°.

With the collar upturned and with my hand wrapped around it, all the weight has been taken off my shoulders and made the lens far more manageable to transport. When putting the lens down, I've also taken to resting it nose down on its hood, provided the ground is level. The hood even features a removable rubber ring at the tip to help protect it from damage – yet another example of the close attention to detail that's been paid to this lens.

Final thoughts

Apart from the nervous start, when I lost the screw out of the lens hood – which would benefit from being irremovable – my experience of using Sigma's latest telephoto zoom in the sort of conditions it was designed for was very positive.

There's no getting away from the fact that this lens weighs a ton, so you won't last long using it handheld before you cry out for a set of sticks or a monopod. Autofocus is generally swift and reacted sharply to focusing on a high-speed subject. The build quality is exemplary for use in the great outdoors by the enthusiasts and pros it's out to target, while the sharpness of the final result doesn't disappoint – just don't expect vignette-free images straight out of the camera without having to apply lens corrections first.

This test leaves one question unanswered: how does this Sigma lens compare head-to-head with Tamron's 150-600mm f/5-6.3 SP Di VC USD lens, which is £555 cheaper for the same versatile focal range? Watch this space!

Removable head

This allows swapping to a different head type, such as for video.

Quick release

Some tripods use easily available plates, which is handy if you need a spare.

Travel tripods

Looking for a lightweight travel tripod for less than £100? Andy Westlake assesses some lesser-known options to see which offers the best value

Multi-angle legs

All these tripods offer three leg angles and reverse folding for improved portability.

Weight hook

A weight hook allows you to hang a bag off your tripod for added stability.

	Sirui T-005X	Benro IT15	Camlink CF	Amazon Travel
Closed length	32.5cm	39.5cm	39cm	31cm
Max height	139cm	147.5cm	134cm	135cm
Leg-only height	105cm	124.5cm	117cm	110cm
Min height	19cm	39.5cm	37cm	18.5cm
Max load	4kg	4kg	6kg	3.6kg
Weight	1.02kg	1.26kg	1.26kg	1.09kg
Price	£90	£90	£100	£50
Leg lock type	Twist	Lever	Twist	Twist
Leg sections	5	5	4	5
QR plate	Arca Swiss	Arca Swiss	Proprietary	Proprietary
Head	Removable	Integrated	Removable	Removable

Spirit level

A built-in spirit level helps to keep horizons straight. Ideally, it should be on the quick-release platform.

Low level

Removing the centre column allows really low-level shooting.





**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
Recommended
★★★★★

Sirui T-005X

£90 • www.sirui.eu/en/home

The Sirui T-005X is the smallest tripod in the group when folded, thanks to five-section legs, a two-section column and a slimline head. However, the T-005X extends to 139cm, helped by rather narrowly angled legs and a long centre column. Unfortunately, these features make it a little wobbly, and it's noticeably more stable with the second column section retracted, giving a 124cm height. The centre column can be unscrewed completely, and the head platform attached directly to the legs for low-angle shooting.

The tripod is very quick to set up, with clever sprung-angle selectors

and twist leg locks that can be undone all at once. The removable C-10X ball head is particularly good, with a separate pan lock, and a small quick-release clamp that accepts Arca Swiss-type plates. Rather than a weight hook, the T-005X has a carabiner, which allows it to be clipped to a bag or belt for carrying.

To top it off, the build quality and finish are superb. Indeed, the biggest letdown is a rather basic draw-cord carry-case. If you want a very portable high-quality tripod, particularly for a small DSLR or compact system camera, the Sirui T-005X is difficult to beat.



**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
Recommended
★★★★★

Benro Travel Tripod IT15

£90 • www.kenro.co.uk

The Benro uses five-section legs to achieve the tallest height here of 147.5cm, but its single-section column results in a similar folded length to the Camlink. One leg can be unscrewed and attached to the centre column to make a monopod, complete with foam handgrip. However, at 1.52m tall, this will probably be a bit short for comfortable use for anyone taller than about 1.73m (5ft 8in).

The conventional leg-angle selectors are easy to use, but while the legs can be set practically flat, the head can't be removed from the centre column and attached to them directly. The column can be

inverted for low-angle shooting, but this leaves the camera upside-down and awkward to use. The integrated ball head is pretty solid and accepts Arca Swiss-type plates, while the quick-release clamp has a neat design to stop the camera sliding off by accident. It also has a built-in bubble level.

Some compromises have been made to hit the price point, such as the lever-leg locks being plastic, but the fit and finish are pretty good, and it's reasonably comfortable with an enthusiast DSLR on top. Overall, the Benro IT15 offers a well-judged balance of features and quality at an attractive price.



**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
★★★

Camlink Carbon Fibre Tripod 1.4m CL-TPCARB2500

£100 • www.camlink.photo/en_us

Like Amazon (right), CamLink is offering a carbon-fibre tripod at a very low price. In this case, it's a four-section model with a one-piece column. While the CL-TPCARB2500 is not very tall, the manufacturer's specifications claim the highest load rating in this group of 6kg. The centre column can be inverted for low-level work, and the removable head has a separate pan lock. There are even two spirit levels.

The low price comes from the extensive use of plastics where other tripods employ metal,

including the central 'spider' and the twist leg locks. The chunky ball head uses a proprietary quick-release plate, and its large platform stops the legs from folding back fully. The small press-in leg-angle locks are a bit fiddly, too.

Unfortunately, with an enthusiast DSLR on top, the tripod simply isn't very stable, even with the centre column retracted. The head is the main culprit, and the legs do much better when used with a different one. This model offers good value, but you'll really need to use a more solid head to get the best results.



**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
★★★★★

AmazonBasics Lightweight Travel Tripod 52 inches

£50 • www.amazon.co.uk

The AmazonBasics Lightweight Travel Tripod 52 inches is probably the cheapest carbon-fibre tripod on the market, which presumably has a lot to do with the buying power of one of the world's largest retailers. In terms of size and design, the AmazonBasics is pretty similar to the Sirui T-005X, with five-section legs and a two-section column, coupled with a removable ball head that has a separate pan lock. The column can be removed completely for low-level shooting.

Unfortunately, plenty of corners have been cut to achieve such

a low price. The fit and finish are quite basic, and the bundled head isn't great, as it tilts the camera when it's locked. The quick-release clamp looks like it should be Arca Swiss-compatible, but it isn't. However, where it counts, the tripod does hold the camera pretty stable, although it works best with the second column section down.

The Amazon tripod is incredible value, although I'd advise buyers to check it over carefully when it arrives, and be prepared to return it if necessary. Personally, I'd also use a better head.

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SRB's ND1000 wins Best Value in Photo Plus' Big Stopper Group Test



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Sizes: 28 to 105mm

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77mm	£17.00
82mm	£20.00

Sizes: 25 to 105mm

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58mm	£20.00
62mm	£21.00
67mm	£23.00
72mm	£26.00
77mm	£28.00
82mm	£31.00

Sizes: 27 to 62mm

Sizes: 40.5 to 82mm

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40.5mm	37-58	77mm	58-105
43mm	37-72	82mm	72-105
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Sizes: 49 to 82mm

Technical Support

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Wired cable release

Q I am looking for a wired cable release for my Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX10. In AP 1 November, John Gibson asks about a wired cable release for his Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX400V and Andy Westlake recommended the JJC MA-F2, which is fitted with a 'Sony Multi interface' connector. Would this fit my RX10? Ideally, I would like the cable to fit directly into the thread in the shutter button, with a short cable length of 12–14in.

B Winstone

A In principle, the JJC MA-F2 release should work with your RX10, although it seems you'll need to have the latest firmware on your camera for it work properly. This is Version 2.00, which can be downloaded from Sony's website at www.sony.co.uk/support/en/product/dsc-rx10.

However, this cable doesn't attach to the shutter-release button, but to an electronic port on the side of the camera. The shutter button accepts a good old-fashioned mechanical release, which you should be able to buy at any camera shop for around £10. These come in a variety of lengths, and can also be bought online from retailers such as www.wexphotographic.com.

Andy Westlake

FireWire connections

Q I have a couple of old hard-disk drives that have a FireWire 800 connection, but it seems that few new computers have this connection. I have most of the images on the disks backed up on more conventional USB drives, but I would still like to make use of the disks, if only as a fast temporary storage solution when editing. As I'm looking to buy a new Apple MacBook, is there any way I can get some use out of these drives?

Will Perkins

A As you know, Apple, along with most other computer manufacturers, has now ditched FireWire and FireWire 800 connections for the much faster USB 3.0 option. Unfortunately, the two standards are very different and cannot be converted using a simple plug/socket adapter-type connection. I'll be happily corrected if any readers know otherwise, but I struggled to find anything that would provide a simple direct solution.

If you are going down the Apple route, there is a solution in the form of the Apple Thunderbolt connection. While most people know that this can be used to attach an external display, it can also be used to attach data devices. Apple makes a Thunderbolt to FireWire 800 adapter that costs £25 (apple.com/uk/product/MD464ZM/A/thunderbolt-to-firewire-adapter?fnode=51). Another option is the Belkin Thunderbolt Express Dock, which costs £179 (www.belkin.com/uk/p/P-F4U055). This connects to a Mac via the Thunderbolt socket and allows the connection of up to eight



Email your questions to: aanswers@timeinc.com,
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#AskAP, or **Facebook**.

Or write to Technical Support,
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Camera charging

Q I am planning to buy a new small camera for my travels, and have been reading the reviews in AP on the Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX100, Fujifilm X30 and Canon PowerShot G7 X. However, can you tell me why some cameras can be charged using USB connections and others can't? I find it really useful not to have to carry lots of chargers on my travels, and to be able to top up my devices with a powerbank during the daytime. It seems to me that in this day and age USB has become the standard, and if all the mobile-phone makers can use it, why can't the camera makers?

Mickael Trumpkins



Powerbanks such as this TP-Link 10,800mAh block can be used to recharge some cameras on the go

A I agree that USB charging is really handy as a backup, although I always want to have an external charger, too. However, there are a couple of reasons why not all cameras can be charged via USB.

First, most camera batteries use high-energy lithium-ion cells that have a voltage of 3.6V. These are used either singly or in pairs placed in series, with the latter giving a 7.2V battery. However, USB has an output voltage of 5V, which means it can only be used to charge 3.6V devices.

Second, the camera needs to have a charging circuit built in, which inevitably adds cost, not least because it has to have various safety measures. However, photographers tend to want external battery chargers, so they can keep a spare topped up. But that

charger also costs a fair amount of money for the manufacturer to supply, as it has to pass electrical safety standards.

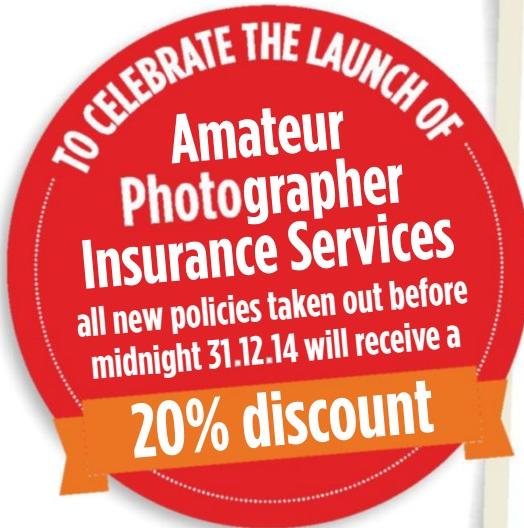
This means that incorporating both USB charging and supplying an external charger essentially costs double. So to keep prices competitive, manufacturers will generally pick just one or the other. For example, the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100 III uses USB charging, whereas the Canon PowerShot G7 X uses an external charger, despite both working with 3.6V batteries.

Smart-device manufacturers are in a slightly different position, as these rarely use replaceable batteries and have to use internal charging. Chinese and European regulations also specify that they must use the USB charging standard.

Andy Westlake

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Technical Support

devices simultaneously via one Thunderbolt port, one gigabit ethernet port, one FireWire 800 port, one 3.5mm audio out, one 3.5mm audio input and three USB 3.0 ports.

Richard Sibley

Elements vs Lightroom

Q Now that Aperture is no longer supported for my Mac, I am trying to make up my mind whether to buy Elements 13 or Lightroom. As there is only a slight difference in cost, could you recommend which I should choose and why?
Don Jevons

A Your question is a common one, Don, but the two options you're considering serve different purposes entirely, so the

answer will ultimately come from your own photo-processing requirements.

If you simply require batch processing and parameter editing, such as adjusting sharpening, saturation and noise reduction, for example, Lightroom is one of the best-equipped pieces of image-organising software available. This is because it features more sophisticated categorisation, importing and batch-processing tools, all of which can be saved as presets for improved workflow.

Think of Photoshop Elements as a first step into the world of complex photo editing, as it shares similar features with its more powerful cousin, Photoshop CC, as well as some that can be found in Lightroom. However, a key distinction between Elements

and Lightroom is that like Photoshop, Elements allows you to create and edit layers of your images, meaning that a composite of different elements and effects can be applied more specifically to different areas of the image. This also makes it easier to heavily edit specific areas within images, such as addressing blemishes and unwanted obstacles or even moving objects around.

Ultimately, Lightroom is a great image-processing tool, commonly used by photographers as a critical part of their workflow to make batch adjustments and organise their photos. Elements, on the other hand, includes features that are more suited to those with retouch/graphic design inclinations who want to make more complex alterations to specific images, one at a time. **Jon Devo**

HOW IT WORKS

I am your

Electronic viewfinder

MY REPUTATION didn't get off to a very good start and I have been around for longer than you might realise, but I am widely regarded as the key to the future of camera evolution – I am an electronic viewfinder. I have been in existence for several decades, initially developed for video cameras and only relatively recently for stills cameras.

Electronic viewfinders, or EVFs, started to become widespread in stills cameras in the early to mid-2000s, primarily with bridge-type cameras. However, resolution and image quality were generally poor, exacerbated by small views, flicker and lag. This all changed in 2008, when Panasonic started the ball rolling with its Lumix mirrorless system cameras and the introduction of the first micro four thirds camera, the Lumix DMC-G1, which boasted an EVF with 1.4 million dots – about seven times the typical resolution of an EVF until then. The 1.4 million dots made up an 800 x 600 (SVGA) 24-bit colour pixel display, comprising one red, blue

and green dot that represented each colour pixel.

Improved viewfinder optics and increased resolution also enabled the view to be much larger, matching that of some DSLRs. The latest EVFs in Panasonic, Olympus, Sony and Samsung mirrorless cameras, in particular, have further improved resolution up to 2.4 million dots or XGA resolution. The display-panel technology behind EVFs are LCD and OLED. These are microscopic versions of the panels used in camera, phone and TV and monitor screens. Refresh rates and finder optics also improved and we now produce a bigger view than full-frame DSLRs. With an EVF you can review your shots in the viewfinder, magnify the live view for critical focus, preview exposure, colour and effects, overlay shooting information and much more. But even with all this, we haven't yet managed to completely replace the clunky vintage prism and mirror technology of optical viewfinder DSLRs. But how long will DSLRs hold out?



The quality of the average EVF has improved greatly



BLAST FROM THE PAST

Canon PowerShot G3

Ian Burley looks at Canon's flagship digital compact camera from 2002

LAUNCHED September 2002

PRICE £600

GUIDE PRICE TODAY £70

IN 2002, the PowerShot G3 was Canon's flagship digital compact camera, offering a 4.1-million-pixel CCD sensor, raw file support, a vari-angle LCD and ISO sensitivity down to 50. You even had the use of a built-in intervalometer. It was a reassuringly chunky design, as opposed to a slim, pocketable one.

What's good You get manual and auto control over exposure and you even get manual focusing with a magnified view. An ND filter is available if the conditions threaten to max out your shutter speed. A wireless infrared controller was included – yes, selfies aren't as new as you might have assumed. Overall image quality for the time was very good, partially thanks to a sharp lens. The G3 also had a good battery life.

What's bad Unlike Canon's DSLRs, which led the way in terms of suppressing sensor noise, the G3 was not outstanding in this respect. Some chromatic aberration issues can be visible. Like most of its counterparts at the time, the G3 was not a very compact camera. Even so, you may be surprised at its relative bulk, especially the depth of the body. Also, the optical viewfinder serves only as a rough guide to framing.

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Technical Support

Create a classic diffused light with this DIY strip light



PHOTO HACKS

DIY strip light

A strip light is a classic light modifier, but it can be expensive - so why not make your own?

WHILE strip lights are used to provide a narrow strip of light to illuminate the length of a subject, they have also been used by portrait photographers for decades. Placing two strip lights either side

of a subject's face creates a classic lighting style, with each side illuminated. Using a long cardboard box or tube, some aluminium foil and paper, you can create a strip light for your existing flashgun.



3 Test it out

Put your flashgun in the hole that was cut in the top and fire it. The foil should reflect the light out, while the paper will help to diffuse it evenly. Use the flaps to spread or narrow the light as needed.



What you will need

- Long cardboard box or tube
- Aluminium foil
- Scissors
- Craft knife
- Glue
- Paper

HOW TO MAKE YOUR LIGHT



1 Create a hole for the flashgun

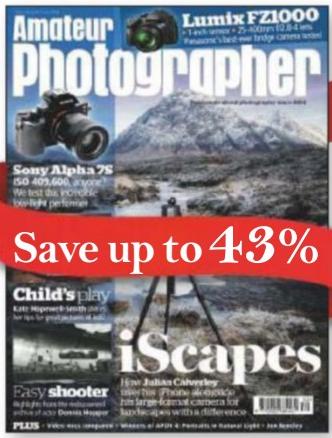
Draw around the head of your flashgun at one end of the box and cut out this shape. This is where the flash will be inserted. Once you have done this, line the inside of the box with aluminium foil.



2 Make a diffuser

Use some thin white paper, or even a few sheets of tracing paper, and create a diffuser that will cover the opening of the box. Don't attach the paper to the flaps of the box as these will form the doors that will narrow the strip when needed.

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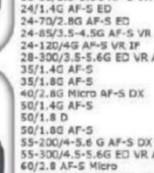
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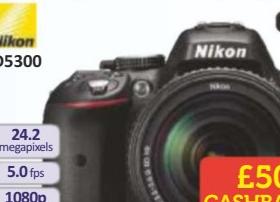
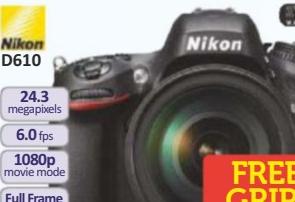
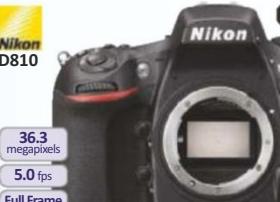
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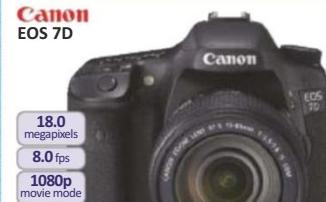
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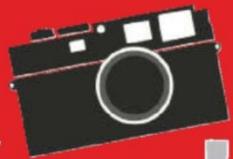
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105mm F2.8 AF Macro.....	E+ / £229	50mm F2 AF Macro.....	E+ / £199		
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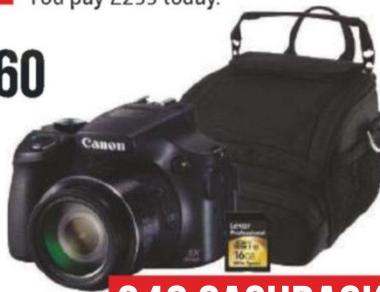
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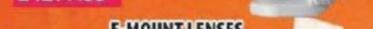
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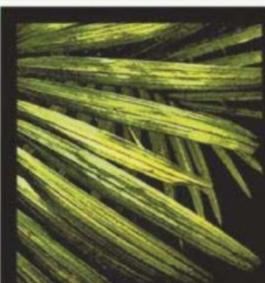
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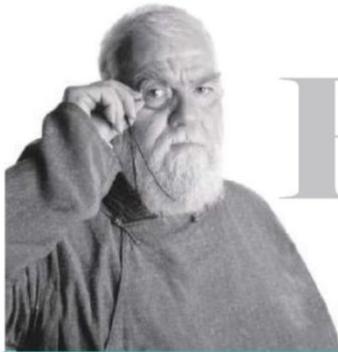
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Final Analysis

Roger Hicks considers...

Thelonious Monk (1965) by W Eugene Smith



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This is the sort of picture we all wish we could take of our friends. Well, those of us with certain kinds of friends, anyway. To call it 'laid back' suggests a considerably higher degree of frenetic activity than is evident here. And yet, behind that relaxation there is a kind of concentration; and, of course, because we know that we are looking at a portrait of one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time, we think we can see the energy there, too, even in repose. But note the phrase 'think we can see'. We are bringing a lot of our own baggage to the picture, a lot of our expectations. At least I am, and I am willing to bet that I am not alone. We also look at the shape of that little roll-up and draw our own conclusions.

But what if it weren't a picture of a famous musician, taken by a famous photographer? How does it stand, purely formally? If

anything, it is then even more impressive. The face pretty much bisects the composition, separating the black of the lower right from the greys of the upper left. It is very slightly backlit, giving us a marvellous mixture of profile and silhouette, and all that space to the left and right of the face is essential. If you don't believe me, use your hands, or a couple of pieces of paper, to mask the left and right of the image. Slide them back and forth. On the right, you need the crown of the hat falling out of shot. It's relaxed (and relaxing) in its own right. On the left, you need the space for the smoke to move into, space for his beard to jut into.

Backgrounds and props

Although the background is completely out of focus, it incorporates more or less straight lines. These emphasise the angle of the face, the relaxation, the laid-backness.

A completely flat, neutral background would not have the same effect. Nor would a more jumbled background. For those old enough to remember when smoking indoors was common, the background also evokes those flat palls of smoke that used to hang in the air in pubs, jazz clubs and business meetings alike.

The hat is what I call a signature prop. Most people have at least one. My monocle is an example. In my teens, I had a girlfriend who always wore a very simple, very distinctive bracelet. Always look out for that prop when you're taking a portrait. It may seem like a cheap trick to incorporate it, but it isn't. It usually says something about how people see themselves. And if it says something about how they see themselves, it probably also says something about how others see them. That's what portraiture is about, after all.

AP

Roger Hicks has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his website at www.rogerandfrances.com). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. Next week he considers an image by Jerome Sessini

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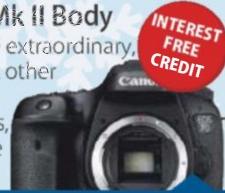


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